

Thursday April 2 1998

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Ulster: the final push for peace

Ewen MacAskill and John Mullan

TONY Blair and the Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern, last night sat down in Downing Street to broker a deal they hope will bring a lasting Northern Ireland peace settlement by midnight next Thursday.

With so few days remaining for achieving the dream that has eluded so many governments over the past 28 years, Mr Blair and Mr Ahern were anxious to resolve their last outstanding differences. They also agreed tactics for chivvying the warring parties into acceptance of a deal over the final few days.

Earlier Mr Blair in the Commons made an impassioned plea to the parties not to squander the chance. "We have the chance of doing that now in Northern Ireland. It is a historic opportunity. It will come this generation and maybe not in future generations," he said.

Mr Ahern, for his part, had pointed to serious differences with Britain over the proposals. In a move signalling hard talking in Downing Street, he said there were "large disagreements that could not be cloaked". Speaking in Dublin before leaving for London, he said: "I don't know whether we can surmount this."

He said: "If we are to be able to give talks chairman Senator George Mitchell a document that will be somewhere near agreement between the two governments, then we will have to succeed



Bertie Ahern: 'differences that cannot be cloaked'

in doing a lot of work on that tonight."

Many at Westminster remained upbeat, believing that crucially Mr Blair and the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble have reached an accommodation.

A British official said last night: "If we can pull this off, Belfast will be the place to be next Thursday. No peace effort yet has got so far. I would not have believed even a few months ago we could have got so far."

The pace will pick up today when the conclusion of an inquiry into the Maze prison is announced. A consultation paper on firearms in Northern Ireland is also to be published, which can be seen as a contribution to decommissioning in the long term.

Mr Mitchell, who has been chairing the peace talks at Castle Buildings at Stormont, is scheduled to present his

proposals for a settlement to the Northern Ireland parties tomorrow and suggest they continue meeting on Saturday if need be in the push for agreement.

Mr Mitchell's proposals will be close to those agreed by Mr Blair and Mr Ahern last night. The two also discussed whether and when Mr Blair should go to Belfast next week, to chair the last stage of the talks.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, warned against expecting fringe violence to end on Good Friday.

Giving evidence to a Commons select committee, she promised that as soon as it was obvious that the settlement had bedded in, there would be reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, a key Sinn Féin demand. But, maintaining the balancing act, she tried to keep the Unionists on-side by promising the change to the RUC would be evolutionary.

In a further concession to Unionist sensibilities, the Government rejected demands in a UN report for a fresh inquiry into the murder of the Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane, claiming there was no new evidence. Mr Finucane was shot dead at home by Loyalist paramilitaries.

There were angry exchanges at the Belfast talks yesterday, but this may have been posturing. John Taylor, deputy leader of the Ulster Unionists, waded in, calling it "outrageous" that the Irish had failed to come up with satisfactory changes in articles two and three of the Republic's constitution.

turn to page 3, column 7



Reg Kray at his brother Ron's funeral. He will have served 30 years in prison on May 8

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE HOGAN

Mardi Gra bombs arrest

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

AMAN was arrested last night in connection with more than 30 'Mardi Gra' bombs in the London area in the past three years. Police also carried out a controlled explosion of a suspect package in west London.

A Scotland Yard spokeswoman confirmed that a man acting suspiciously in the Ruislip area of west London had been arrested. He had what is believed to be a firearm and was taken to a police station to be interviewed.

Earlier a suspect package had been seen near Sainsbury's supermarket in South Ruislip. Armed police evacuated the store and a controlled explosion was carried out on what turned out to be a harmless empty box. No-one was injured.

Sainsbury's has been the main target of the self-styled Mardi Gra bomber in recent months.

He started his campaign in 1994 when the target was apparently Barclays Bank. The first bombs were sent in video boxes which contained the words 'Welcome to the Mardi Gra Experience'. The bomber has since signed himself Mardi Gra in letters to targets.

No-one has been seriously hurt but police have become increasingly concerned at the possibility of injuries and the cost of pursuing the bomber. Well over £1 million has been spent on the investigation.

What has puzzled the police is that the bomber has continued to act despite the fact that he has extracted no money from his targets and apparently espouses no political cause.

The bombs have consisted of shotgun cartridges and timing devices.

Some of them have been left hidden in Sainsbury's shopping bags and have exploded after passers-by have picked up the bags and taken them away.

Banks v Livingstone in fight to be London mayor

John Duncan

SEVENTIES nostalgia, disco and retro food were given a new lease of life yesterday with the news that Tony Banks will sing it out against Reg Livingstone to be Labour's Cockney rebel candidate for London's first directly elected mayor. The pair were the capital's favourite politicians during their time at the Greater London Council together in the 70s and 80s.

Mr Banks yesterday confirmed that he would attempt to become Labour's candidate for London mayor, assuming Londoners vote to have one in next month's referendum.

Mr Banks, MP for Newham North West and sports minister, joins Mr Livingstone as the only two declared candidates for the job. Mr Banks, who joined the GLC in 1970 and was chairman in the year of its demise, vied with Mr Livingstone for socialist street cred in the days of the GLC.

Mr Banks was best loved for his attempt to ban the County Hall champagne bar for being elitist and for inviting Miss Whiplash to hold a book launch at the same venue.

Mr Banks may be in the un-



UP AGAINST TONY, KEN AND JEFFREY WILSON, PUS.

familiar role of being the establishment's choice for the job, with Mr Livingstone considered too leftwing for current party tastes. The party desperately need a popular candidate with London credibility to sidestep a Livingstone challenge and take on a possible high profile campaign by Jeffrey Archer.

"I'm definitely going to go for it," said Mr Banks yesterday. "After I've seen the terms and conditions of course. I'm going to go for it, because it's a great job."

Mr Banks's street-sharp Cockney credibility will

stand him in good stead, though he was actually born well out of the Bow Bells catchment area — in Belfast in 1943 and moved to Brixton in London a couple of years later.

Though Mr Banks used to revel in his role as a parliamentary mischief maker — he once described Nicholas Soames as "his own personal food mountain" — he has found himself a soft target for media attacks as sports minister. One tabloid targeted him last October with a headline "Sack This Clown" after he described William Hague as a fascist.

He also says what he thinks rather more freely than ministerial guidelines normally suggest — "glitches in my transition from saloon bar sage to world statesman". He was accused of another gaffe when he called for a UK national football team instead of four home countries, and he stirred up a minor storm when he opposed national anthems at international football games because they stir up nationalism.

"They say gaffes, they ain't gaffes," he said. "They're ideas, if you don't like them fair enough. If you think they're rubbish by all means say that they are, but they ain't gaffes."

Four more years for Kray: 'It's like a death sentence'

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

REG Kray, the former East End gangster, has been told he will not be considered for release for at least two years and probably for much longer. Last night, his lawyer described the decision as like a death sentence.

On May 6, Kray, aged 64, will have served the 30 years recommended at his Old Bailey trial. He had hoped that, following his recent marriage, he would be released or at least transferred to an open prison in preparation for release.

Yesterday his lawyer, Trevor Linn, said Kray had been called in to the governor's office in Wayland prison, near Thetford, Norfolk, and told his parole application had been turned down. He cannot apply again for two years.

"This is a decision without humanity," said Mr Linn yesterday. "It offers this man no hope that he will be released. It's a decision aimed at condemning him to death within the system which is what the establishment would like."

Mr Linn said Kray had been told he was not even to be considered for a move to a Category D prison — an open prison — for two years. Since life sentence prisoners normally have a period in an open jail in preparation for release, this would indicate that the earliest Kray might hope to be out is around 2002, when he will be nearly 70.

"The decision flies in the face of the overwhelming evidence presented to the parole board," said Mr Linn. In February, the Guardian disclosed that psychiatric reports presented to the board indicated Kray was no longer a risk.

Last night, Roberta Kray, whom he married last year, said she was devastated by the news. "I can't believe it," said Mrs Kray, aged 39, who has moved to Norfolk to be near her husband.

"But he has been very philosophical about it. He told me last week that this was what he expected."

She believed one of the factors in the decision was that he had not "addressed his offending behaviour" as is required. He has expressed his regrets to the family of Jack "The Hat" McVitie, for whose murder he was jailed but he has not

said he was sorry he killed, arguing it was like killing a soldier in battle.

Mrs Kray, a classics and English literature graduate, married Reg Kray in prison last year. They had met when she was helping with publicity for a video about his late twin Ron, who died while serving his sentence in Broadmoor.

Kray has indicated that he would not live in London near his old haunts if released, but would look for a house in Norfolk where he was evacuated during the war. Roberta Kray has said they would like to live in the country and that many of their friends now do not have any connections with crime and his gangland past.

Mr Linn said that he would be seeking an explanation from Home Secretary Jack Straw about the reasons behind the decision.

"Jack Straw has obviously rubber-stamped the decision," said Mr Linn.

Reg Kray was jailed for life at the Old Bailey in 1969. The judge told him he should serve a minimum of 30 years. The average time served by a life sentence prisoner before release is 18 years.

Prague Writers' Festival 1998

The 8th Prague Writers' Festival presents a selection of fine authors from the Czech Republic and around the world. Meet them at the Franz Kafka Centre, Old Town Square, at 7 pm from 20 to 25 April.

Monday 20 April	City Lights
Lawrence Ferlinghetti	USA
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Tuesday 21 April	British Day
Martin Amis	Great Britain
Brian Patten	Great Britain
Per Olov Enquist	Sweden
Isabel Fonseca	USA
Wednesday 22 April	Portuguese-Language Day
Pedro Tamen	Portugal
Mário Souza	Brazil
Mia Couto	Mozambique
Germano Almeida	Cape Verde
Tahar Ben Jelloun	Morocco
Miroslav Holub	Czech Republic
Thursday 23 April	Austrian Day
Lilian Faschinger	Austria
Robert Menasse	Austria
Claudio Magris	Italy
Lucy Vack	Czech Republic
Friday 24 April	For Bohumil Hrabal
Robert Creeley	USA
John Banville	Ireland
Dante Mariani	Italy
Rhea Galanaki	Greece
Mila Haugová	Slovakia
Viera Prokešová	Slovakia
Daniela Fischerová	Czech Republic
Saturday 25 April	Polish Day
Ryszard Krynicky	Poland
Andrzej Szczypiorski	Poland
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The Festival is dedicated to Bohumil Hrabal. Patron: the City of Prague.

For further details, please contact the Prague Writers' Festival Foundation, Staroměstské nám. 22, Prague 1 tel/fax +420 2 24 21 30 30

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<p>4</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>16</p>



Sketch

Blair defends his dark alter ego



Simon Hoggart

THE Prime Minister yesterday defended his controversial Press Secretary, Alastair Campbell.

Of course he did. Mr Campbell was sitting up in the Gallery, glowing down. If Mr Blair had said a word out of place, one suspected, he would have leapt down onto the floor, grabbed the helpless Premier by the lapels, and shouted: "That's complete bollocks, that is!"

The problem for both Mr Blair and Mr Campbell is that, while they may not, in the narrowest sense, have been caught out fibbing (in the same way the response "Who, me? You must be joking!" is not actually a denial that you stole the last slice of cake) no one can believe that they meant what they seem to be saying.

For instance, the first question Mr Blair faced yesterday was from the Tory Howard Flight, who wanted to know who specifically placed the notorious March 18 phone call between Mr Blair and his Italian opposite number, Romano Prodi.

"I am not going to disclose details of conversations," he said. "But as my press spokesman pointed out, the call was actually made by the Italian Prime Minister to me."

True as far as it goes, perhaps. But how do we know that Mr Prodi was not just returning Mr Blair's call, having been out of the office at the time? Or that Downing Street had originated the call but asked the Italians to ring back, in an admirable attempt to save public money?

Maybe it wasn't even about Rupert Murdoch. Perhaps, like Stevie Wonder, he had just called to tell Mr Blair that he loved him.

Gerald Kaufman, himself a former press officer, well used to the dark arts of media manipulation, then stood up to make a startling defence of Mr

Campbell. Attacks on this saintly figure were, he said, "over the top" and "hyped". Mr Kaufman (normally quite a thoughtful chap, and for the most part, fairly sane) compared Mr Campbell favourably to Margaret Thatcher's press secretary, Sir Bernard Ingham. He went on to list Sir Bernard's multitudinous crimes against humanity (which mostly turned out to involve hurrying the feelings of various trembling, sensitive Tory Cabinet ministers).

There is of course a difference. Sir Bernard was the continuation of his boss by other means. Nobody could bear the relentless pressure of being Mrs Thatcher all the time, so he took over the job when she was tired, or asleep, or had been at the decanter.

Mr Campbell, by contrast, is the opposite of Tony Blair. He is Mr Hyde to his master's Dr Jekyll. Sir Bernard emphasised Mrs Thatcher's image; Mr Campbell contradicts Tony Blair's.

Paddy Ashdown kept trying to drag the subject back to Mr Murdoch. The Prime Minister airily remarked that he wanted to make sure there was no unfair treatment for BSkyB "or any significant British company".

In fact, BSkyB is a British company in the sense that the Coca Cola corporation is — in that you can buy its products here. Not in any other.

Later, Nicholas Soames captured the attention of the House by loitering around with his feet up on the bench in front of him. Some MPs tried and failed to raise this as a point of order. After Mr Soames had made a lengthy and somewhat rambling speech on the Regional Development Bill, the minister, Richard Caborn, said that he must have had "a very good lunch", and was "extremely emotional, if not a little tired".

We all know what that's supposed to mean. In fact Mr Soames narrowly avoided a very serious charge. The suggestion that Mr Soames had had a mere cheese sandwich for lunch, washed down by a cup of tea, would be quite outrageous. The boys in the wigs and gowns would have been instantly briefed and would look forward to enough "refreshers" to make Mr Soames himself envious.

Review

Freshly minting classic tunes

Review

Diana Krall/Jain Ballamy
Ronnie Scott's, London

THE great singer-pianist Diana Krall stunned her first-night audience, as expected. Advance ticket sales are now halted for her week-long season, so late-deciders have to stand or forget it, but nobody minds. That a superb, hard-driving postbop band led by the British saxophonist

Jain Ballamy is also on the bill is a bonus, and a neat contrast to Krall's lounge-reflexiveness and sideling swing. Preoccupied and faintly apprehensive, Krall appears to turn herself into a musical instrument. Head bowed over the keyboard, her jawline sometimes appeared to twitch in synchronicity with a stuttering note or a reverberant right-hand trill.

The result is the transformation of a mainstream package that jazz nostalgia and neoclassicism have mostly turned into dinner-party cliché — the singer-pianist and the Great American Songbook. By her effortlessly flexible manipulation of rhythm at the piano (so that the music constantly surges forward, however tantalisingly, or pulls diffidently back), by her chattering of dynamics, and by her cherishing of the spare and the succinct, Krall constantly reinvents the most familiar

materials. Her voice attacks notes with unexpected brusqueness, or sly circumspection, and the pitching undulates like the movement of water, so that the transforming effect expands into the remoulding of classic lyrics as if they were newly minted. Often sounding close to the emotional edge, she brings the resignation, brief ecstasies and quiet desperation of those old Broadway love songs back to life.

In the first set of her run, Krall produced gleaming accounts of All or Nothing At All, Boulevard of Broken Dreams, Baby Baby All The Time, and an assortment of other standards from her recent impulse discs. But even with Krall's gifts, the show wouldn't have been as compelling as it was without the delicate empathy of her partners Russell Malone (guitar) and Ben Wolfe (bass). The unplugged-sounding Malone, in particular, is Krall's perfect foil — supplying streams of soft, padding chordwork behind her sudden, darting flourishes, and bursts of complex, singing, vibrato-packed solo lines reminiscent of Django Reinhardt or B B King. A tour de force.

Diana Krall's trio and Jain Ballamy's quartet are at Ronnie Scott's, Frith Street, until Saturday. This review appeared in later editions of yesterday's Guardian.

More than half the uniformed staff take protest action at flagship prison hit by brutality allegations

100 Scrubs staff call in sick

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

MORE than half the uniformed staff at the flagship prison hit by brutality allegations refused to turn up to work yesterday by reporting in sick as a criminal investigation started at the jail.

The action by more than 100 prison officers at Wormwood Scrubs, west London, was defended last night by the Prison Officers' Association, which claimed the brutality allegations had led to officers

"breaking down in tears" and their families being abused in the streets around the prison.

The mass refusal to work on sickness grounds halted life inside one of Europe's largest prisons with the 1,300 inmates locked in their cells for most of the day and work and education classes cancelled. Prison officers are legally banned from taking industrial action and the "mass sickie" was widely seen as an attempt to get round the law.

More than 80 governor grade and other managerial staff from other London prisons and from Prison Service headquarters were drafted in

to run the segregation unit — scene of most of the alleged brutality incidents — and other parts of the prison.

The Director-General of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, said yesterday "it was not a huge coincidence" that so many prison officers had reported in sick. "We must assume that this is a protest action," he said.

Solicitors, Hickman Rose, acting for the inmates, yesterday gave the Metropolitan police a dossier detailing the allegations which have led to the suspension of eight prison officers and a senior manager. Lawyers also went to

the jail to take statements arising from new allegations.

Ron Adams, the POA's vice-chairman, insisted that those who had gone sick were genuinely unwell. "Our members were off sick. There is no allegation about it. A lot of people have been stressed out about the situation that has existed here. Their families have been abused. People have been calling their fathers and mothers 'bullies' because they have worked at Wormwood Scrubs," he said.

He added prison staff had been treated shabbily by the Prison Service. "We saw some of our members yesterday breaking down in tears because of what happened."

POA officials said they did not want to oppose the suspension of the accused officers. Last night they said the new governor, Stephen Moore, had agreed increased levels of supervision in "particularly sensitive areas" so our members feel protected from unsubstantiated and malicious allegations.

It is expected that the prison will now return to normal. "Hopefully some of our members might be feeling better in the next day or two," said Mr Adams.

The Prison Service was alarmed by the protest action, with Mr Tilt saying the refusal to report for duty "did nothing to enhance the reputation of prison officers."

"Wormwood Scrubs has an important role to play and the support of all his staff in running this large and very complex prison. I recognise that the current investigation has unsettled many staff but the way forward is to have the allegations properly and externally investigated."

He added that support was being made available for staff who were "genuinely suffering from stress."

Hamas vows to avenge killing of its leader

David Sharrock on fears that extremists' demise will provoke suicide bombs in Israel

THE militant Islamic group Hamas last night vowed to avenge the assassination of its master bomb-maker, Muhi al-Din Sharif, whose slaying during this week seems destined to lead to further suicide attacks on Israel's streets.

Undisguised glee in some Israeli quarters at the violent fate of an extremist accused of overseeing at least five bombings has fanned fury among Palestinians, who smell a plot by Shin Bet, the Israeli secret security force, to dispose of one of their most wanted targets and then blame his demise on his own people.

The circumstances of the death of Muhi al-Din Sharif, who bore the nom de guerre of "Engineer Two", are murky, but the consequences could be chillingly straightforward.

Sharif belonged to the military wing of Hamas, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, which has carried out more than a dozen suicide attacks in Israel since 1994. "Hamas pledges to our martyred leader... that the martyrs will continue to fight the occupier," a leaflet issued yesterday stated, promising further attacks.

Their 32-year-old leader went to the martyrs' paradise on Sunday evening in the West Bank town of Ramallah, 10 miles north of Jerusalem. The sky was lit up by an explosion as a car bomb detonated.

At first it was believed that the bomber had killed himself as he made the Ford Escort ready for a busy street in Jerusalem.



The mother of Muhi al-Din Sharif displaying a picture of him in 1996, when he was on the run

PHOTOGRAPH: AHAD AHAD

However, a Palestinian pathologist, Jalal Jabara, concluded yesterday that Sharif was shot twice in the chest and once in a leg about three hours before the blast and died from the bullet wounds.

Palestinian police later said that the car bomb had been triggered by remote control. The Palestinian

planning minister, Nabil Shaath, pointed the finger at Israel, saying: "This is just another new crime, a new assassination carried out by Israel, murdering someone and then placing him in a car and then detonating the car."

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, denied Israeli involvement.

"I have only incomplete information about this incident, but I can tell you categorically that Israel has nothing to do with it," he said.

Efraim Sneh, an Israeli opposition MP, said it did not matter who had killed Engineer Two. "Whoever brought his demise deserves all praise and the

thanks of all of Israel," he said.

He had perhaps forgotten the legacy of the assassination by Israeli secret services of Sharif's predecessor and mentor Yahya Ayyash, the original "Engineer Two", killed by a booby-trapped mobile telephone after a deadly four-year game of cat-and-mouse.

'Muhi al-Din is gone, but tens will replace him. Jihad will continue'

Ayyash's murder prompted a revenge killing spree by Hamas's military wing. Four suicide bombings in eight days in February and March 1996 killed 55 people. The scope of the slaughter altered the course of the Middle East peace process, giving the rightwing Mr Netanyahu — who promised tough security measures — the narrowest of general election victories over Labour's Shimon Peres.

Sharif, an electrician, was believed by Israeli security forces to be Izz al-Din al-Qassam's military commander in the West Bank. He went on the run in August 1995, narrowly escaping in his pyjamas from his home as an arrest party closed in.

Sharif was accused of having masterminded up to five suicide bombings, including the two attacks which killed 24 people last summer in Jerusalem's central market and its busiest pedestrian street.

Shin Bet claims he was training a new generation of bombers who advocate attacks on Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority if they persist in cooperating with Israel.

Sharif's brother Ibrahim had no doubt that the murder was the work of the Zionists. "Muhi al-Din is gone, but tens will replace him," he said. "Yahya Ayyash has gone, thousands will replace him. Jihad will continue."

Israel yesterday adopted a 20-year-old UN resolution calling for Israel to withdraw its troops from south Lebanon but linked the pull-out to "required security arrangements" — a guarantee by Lebanon that it would deploy troops to prevent cross-border guerrilla attacks.

Lebanon and Syria rejected the Israeli initiative, saying that a 1978 Security Council Resolution called for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal.

Leader comment, page 9

Britain could relieve Third World debt, MPs told

David Pollister

BRITAIN could easily cancel the debts owing from the world's 28 poorest countries, the chairman of the Treasury select committee, Giles Radice, was told yesterday at a meeting with campaigners for international debt relief.

Experts from the broad coalition, Jubilee 2000, presented new research showing that the total debt of £1.4bn

represents less than the government subsidy to the Channel Tunnel rail link.

One of the coalition partners, the World Development Movement, has calculated that the first 14 highly-indebted countries could have their UK debts cancelled outright with the amount that Britain reimbursed to arms exporters since 1994 for non-payment of bills by Third World countries.

The coalition, representing 73 pressure groups, is seeking

to have the backlog of unpayable debts — those that will never be recovered — written off by the millennium.

The meeting with Mr Radice in the House of Commons was an attempt to open up a new front in the campaign, highlighting the fact that the Treasury holds the purse strings while questions of debt and aid are handled by Clare Short's International Development Department.

"Cancelling all poor countries' debts would have

an effect many times greater than the cost," said Jessica Woodroffe, WDM's head of campaigns.

Some aid agencies believe Treasury officials are less enthusiastic than their boss Gordon Brown, who has shown sympathy for debt forgiveness in advance of the G8 summit in Birmingham next month, when it will be high on the agenda. Last September in his "Mauritius Mandate", he announced the cancellation of £132m bilateral

debt for the lower-income Commonwealth countries.

Next week Mr Brown and Ms Short will give evidence to the Commons international development committee, which is planning to publish its own report on debt relief two days before the summit.

At Tuesday's committee hearing, Oxfam also urged Britain to take a lead in reforming the debt forgiveness initiative of the World Bank and the IMF. Kevin Watkins, Oxfam's policy ad-

viser, told the committee the process should be speeded up if countries promised to spend 80 per cent of the money saved on health and education. At present the countries likely to be eligible generally have to go through six years of austerity programmes before they qualify.

After the meeting Ms Woodroffe said: "Mr Radice was very sympathetic and said he would raise in the committee the possibility of doing a study on debt."

There's gripping... and then there's

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IN BOOKSHOPS NOW

Crash hero pilot warns passengers to listen to pre-flight safety drill

Martin Wainwright

THE pilot whose split-second decision to crash-land his burning aircraft saved Leeds United from catastrophe at Stansted airport described the incident yesterday as a warning to all passengers.

Captain John Hackett, 61, who defied company policy to land his BAe 748 when an engine exploded, said that far too many travellers ignored cabin crew's pre-flight safety demonstrations.

He singled out the Leeds assistant manager, David O'Leary, 40, who forced open an emergency door and marshalled passengers out, for being "one of the few passengers who actually listened to the cabin staff's safety announcement".

When the plane's right-hand wing was engulfed in flames at 150ft, a few seconds after take-off, Mr O'Leary, a former Arsenal and Fire defender, "remembered everything said in the emergency

briefing and actually assisted the evacuation".

The pilot also praised his three crew, saying that he was embarrassed at being singled out as a hero when the credit belonged to the whole Emerald Airlines team. They had acted immediately when he abandoned standing company policy to circle and tackle the emergency, and instead took the plane straight down.

A stewardess, Nicola Mee, who had flown for only three weeks, was singled out for praise by her senior colleague, Helen Dutton, who also said that too few passengers listened to the safety drill.

David O'Leary came up afterwards and said he would like to thank Nicola. She had actually gone down before he took off and pointed out to the passengers over the wing, including him, how to open the exits in an emergency.

Captain Hackett, a father of two from Leek, Staffordshire, said that the handling of the emergency was "a concerted

team effort", with Ms Dutton and First Officer Garry Lucas also behaving in an exemplary way. He said that Mr Lucas, 33 and from Liverpool, "was out of his seat in the flash of an eye and assisting in opening doors and getting people off".

He apologised that some of the 40 passengers on the charter flight to Leeds, laid on for the United team, officials and corporate guests after a 3-0 defeat at West Ham, had been forced to jump from the plane's upturned tail. Unfortunately, what was left of the runway was just a little too short.

A Britannia Airways pilot was praised yesterday after he landed his Boeing 767 and 274 passengers on one engine after the other burst into flames 25 minutes out of Abu Dhabi. Keith Harper writes.

The passengers were on their way to Gatwick after a holiday in the Maldives Islands. An airline spokesman said that Captain Ian Thomas had done everything by the book.



Pincer movement... a pregnant lobster is marked by tail-clipping before being released to help boost the species in the North Sea. PHOTOGRAPH: PETER BYRNE

Ministry aims to trap 10,000 lobsters to bump up North Sea stocks

Martin Wainwright

THE Government went to market yesterday to buy no less than 10,000 pregnant lobsters. The crustaceans — six of which have already been bought for a tenner each — will restock inshore fishing grounds in the North Sea.

The first half-dozen were lined up yesterday at Hull Marina to have a V-notch

clipped in their fan tails to mark them out as protected breeding stock.

In its pilot buy-back scheme the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will spend £100,000 in the next four years to acquire, mark and release egg-bearing lobsters caught between Tyneside and The Wash. "We are very concerned about stocks because of the increased time it's taking for fishermen to

build up a good lobster catch," said Alex Smith of the North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee. "This project should see an increase of some 34,000 lobsters in the target area, within six miles of the coast."

Part-financed by the European fishery resources budget, the huge shellfish-buying spree will be phased to avoid an artificial hike in prices. Ministry buyers will pay

market rates — about £6 for 1lb. Bylaws are now in force imposing a maximum 25,000 fine and confiscation of equipment for those who trap the notched animals.

The first lobster group set sail late yesterday on North East Guardian 2, the committee's protection vessel. After their photocall, they were released off Spurn Head to start work on 34,000 descendants.

Scientists search for BSE 'clue' in plants

James Meikle

SCIENTISTS are testing potatoes and the leaves of the daisy, toadflax, bindweed and other English plants to see whether they played a part in the BSE epidemic because cows ate them.

Government-funded institutes conducting experiments are also hoping to discover chemicals in the plants that offer clues for a cure for the disease as well as its cause.

Stephen Dealler, a critic of Government's handling of the crisis, has spent £23,000 of his own money on similar work with a Bradford University researcher because he thought chemicals in the plants may have helped transform proteins thought to be a factor in BSE. But chemicals in the same family might inhibit the spread of the disease too.

Dr Dealler, a consultant microbiologist at Burnley general hospital, Lancashire, told the BSE inquiry yesterday how schoolchildren had helped collect flowers for experiments but the work took too much time from medical duties.

He had had the idea after visiting researchers in Kew Gardens, London, who were looking at chemicals that could prevent or alter the way sugars worked on viruses and might stem HIV and other diseases. He decided to see whether

The possibility remains that chemicals found in these plants could be both a cause and a cure.

similar chemicals were found in plants that might be eaten by cows. Previous ministers did not want to fund such work because it would give the impression that there was a risk from eating cow tissues.

The experiments were being continued at the Institute of Grassland Research, Aberystwyth, and the Institute of Animal Health, Compton, Berkshire.

The major finding so far was that potato peelings contained large amounts of the chemicals.

"Indeed the compounds were in such a large amount as to be expected to cause effects if an animal ate them in reasonable amounts." The possibility remained that chemicals found in the plants could be both a cause and a cure.

Rob Nash, of the Aberystwyth Institute, who had been doing work independently of Dr Dealler but was now using extracts from his plants, said: "Although it would be interesting to know whether these cause the initial change in the protein to make it infective, now we are rather more interested in cures."

He had tried unsuccessfully to get research council funding.

"I think they thought this was a bit of a wack idea," he said. "The experiments were still in their early stages and would involve seeing how the chemicals worked in the guts of animals. The idea of chemicals on certain plants being a factor in BSE might help explain why it did not occur widely in other countries, he suggested.

Livestock trade rejects ban on sheep exports

Peter Hetherington

THE Minister of Agriculture was yesterday at the centre of a dispute with Britain's sheep exporters after urging them to halt the shipment of live animals to the Continent for the principal Muslim festival.

Jack Cunningham's intervention marks a toughening stand by the Government over a trade in which an estimated 12,000 sheep a week have been exported from the south coast over the past month — some destined for the festival of Eid-el Kebir next week, which marks the end of Ramadan.

The ministry made it clear last night that it was pressing the European Commission to

ban all shipments, but in an angry response the British Association of Sheep Exporters accused it of threatening British jobs by attempting to appease the welfare lobby.

Islamic organisations were also outraged. The association was alarmed by a recent statement from the animal welfare minister, Elliot Morley — followed by Dr Cunningham's appeal — which claimed that abattoirs around Paris could not cope with "the large number of animals people want to slaughter during the festival".

This had led to sheep being inexpertly killed without stunning and "sometimes with blunt knives".

In a letter to the association's secretary, Kevin Feakins, Dr Cunningham wrote:

"It must be the case that those who care about their stock would not wish them to be exported for slaughter in this way."

But the Islamic Foundation, Britain's leading Muslim research organisation, accused him of writing from ignorance.

In a letter to Dr Cunningham yesterday, it pointed out that the use of blunt knives was illegal in the Islamic world. "An apology would be appropriate," a spokesman said. The foundation argues that the halal method of slaughtering is far more humane than killing animals with a stun gun, which merely "internalised pain". Several abattoirs in Britain were already dedicated to halal meat.

Fog 'fools' drivers into going too fast

Ten Stafford Science Editor

PSYCHOLOGISTS may have solved the mystery of the murderous motorway pile-ups on foggy days. The drivers tearing through the mist believe that they are actually driving slowly.

Robert Snowden and colleagues at the University of Wales at Cardiff tested volunteers in a virtual driving simulator — with added fog. He said: "They were driving down a completely empty

road. We had a few simulated trees towards the side of the road and a dashed white line down the centre. They tested the volunteers on clear sunny roadways and foggy ones, and asked them to assess when they were travelling at the "same" speed on each. In fact, they were driving faster in foggy weather than they thought. The fogger the road ahead, the faster they drove.

The research confirms a perception mystery first identified 16 years ago, and could answer questions about the

sites of the brain that register contrast and speed. But it could also have implications for road safety planners.

When visibility is poor, the scientists say in Nature today, drivers are reluctant to take their eyes off the road for fear of missing that moment when something looms out of the fog. So drivers would be more likely to rely on their own perception of speed.

There were other factors at work. One of those was that if an object seemed hazy, then the viewer tended to assume that it was far away.

Businessman refused grant feels taken for a ride

A GOVERNMENT training agency apologised yesterday for giving a debt-ridden businessman the shock of his life when he boarded a number 51 bus, writes Martin Wainwright. Still smarting from his failure to get a seedcorn grant from Leeds Training and Enterprise Council, Tony Hargreaves was astonished to see his own photograph beaming from a TEC advert on the Yorkshire double-decker, above.

"Support from TEC New Enterprises has made me realise my dream and got my business underway," the caption told travellers.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," said Mr Hargreaves yesterday, contemplating life at 44 with a broken marriage and £12,000 owed to creditors. The TEC, part of a national network, had actually pulled the rug on his business, he said. Now a van driver, Mr Har-

gesell said that Leeds TEC officials had initially encouraged him to seek £2,000 for computer equipment to launch his infant design firm. At the same time, he said, he had been pointed on to illustrate TEC promotional material.

Later he was told his cash flow was unrealistic and his business plan unworkable. Mr Hargreaves said he blamed the TEC for the failure of his company because they had offered "just waffle, not cash".

Girl to contest 'derisory' award

Straw joins outcry at £18,500 for loss of mother and sister in attack

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

CALLS for a review of compensation payments to the victims of crime were made yesterday following the disclosure that Josie Russell, aged 11, who survived a violent attack in which her mother and sister died, had been awarded £18,500 for her loss.

Lawyers for the Russell family, MPs and victims' rights organisations called for a review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority's fixed tariff for losses and injuries suffered as a result of crime. The Home Secretary said that the Russell family should appeal.

The girl was severely beaten in an attack in which her mother Ian, aged 45, and sister Megan, aged six, were both killed near their home in Chilenden in Kent in July 1998. Initially, it was feared that she might not survive, but she has made a remark-

able recovery, having moved back to Wales with her lecturer father, Shaun.

The family's lawyer, Sarah Harman, said yesterday that there would be an appeal. Ms Harman said: "This is a derisory settlement and a very graphic example of the inadequacy of the scheme. The authority has the possibility here of exercising its discretion generously, and compensating Josie for the terrible loss of her mother and younger sister. It didn't take the opportunity, and gave the lowest possible level award."

She added: "This is a child with very special needs who has lost her mother in dreadful circumstances. This award is to compensate her at the rate of £2,000 a year for the loss of her mother." A spokeswoman for Victim Support called yesterday for a review of the system, which was changed in 1996. She said it was insufficiently flexible. "The problem is that there is no discretion," she said. While victims always said



Josie Russell: has made a remarkable recovery

Past awards caused controversy

WITH applications submitted before the new system was introduced, victims of crime could claim significantly higher amounts from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

In 1996, a Midlands teacher who was attacked by a schoolgirl and left severely disabled, and had to take early retirement, won almost £35,000 in compensation.

Also in 1996, another teacher from Leamington Spa in Warwickshire was awarded £32,000 following an attack by a 10-year-old.

In July 1997, Eyal Scholz, aged 19, who had brain dam-

age through being shaken as a baby, was awarded £1.3 million after his adoptive parents pressed for compensation.

And the authority has not been without controversy. Wilf Ball, whose son, Jonathan, aged three, died in the Warrington IRA bomb blast in 1993, received only £5,000 for his suffering.

In 1996, five men who had been physically and sexually abused in childhood, appealed against the authority's refusal to compensate them because they had criminal convictions.

They were given awards of up to £25,000.

For Dover, whose constituency includes the village of Chilenden, described the award as "inadequate, derisory and insulting", while Julian Brazier, Conservative MP for Canterbury in Kent, said: "This seems a very mean award."

The authority issued a statement yesterday to explain the system of compensation, adding that any applicant dissatisfied with a deci-

sion was entitled to have it reviewed. There was also the further possibility of an appeal to an independent panel.

According to the guidelines, loss of a parent entitles a child to £2,000 a year until the age of 18. A discretionary award may also be given for care costs. The authority receives 80,000 applications a year; in 60 per cent of cases, the victim receives some compensation.

Britons' living standards on the decline

EC statistics reveal job creation means lower wages for workers

Peter Hetherington

BRITAIN'S much-vaulted claim to be the job creation centre of Europe during the latter Conservative years was dented yesterday when new figures showed it had slipped further behind the European Union average for wealth.

Prosperity had deteriorated in every English region, as well as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, according to research undertaken for the European Commission. Richard Caborn, minister for the regions, last night described the figures from the Eurostat agency, which cover the period 1993-5, as "a damning indictment of the Tories' record in government".

While the figures at first ap-

peared to contradict the last government's employment record, economists specialising in regional development said they merely underlined the downside of a deregulated, flexible labour market in which workers often paid the price for job creation with low wages.

Although the Government last night exploded the figures as an indictment of the Tories, Labour is similarly committed to a flexible market as a "third way" — in contrast to the continental model of regulation and, implicitly, higher wages and a shorter working week. But the figures will strengthen the Government's hand in its battle with Brussels to avoid cuts in European Union regional funding.

One economist, Keith

Burge, of Newcastle-based Economic Research Services, cautioned that relatively high employment levels did not necessarily mean prosperity.

"These figures suggest that in terms of job creation there are a lot less well-paid areas of the economy. You can have falling unemployment without GDP rising."

Every two years the Eurostat agency produces figures for the European Commission which measure purchasing power per head. They set the performance of each member country against an average figure for the EU as a whole.

Against an EU average for wealth per head of 100, the UK slumped from 99 in 1993 to 96 in 1995 — the last date for which figures are available. The figure for England matched the average range of 100 in 1993 but had slipped to 98 by 1995.

In Scotland, wealth fell from 97 to 96, and in Northern Ireland the figure of 80 in 1993

fell to 78 by 1995. Only in Wales did wealth per head hold steady at a level of 80.

Across the English region, Eurostat measured a fall in relative wealth.

Although growth per head in London is well above the EU average, it still fell from 147 on the index in 1993 to 139 by 1995 — underlining, yet again, the north-south divide.

In the South-East, the figure fell from 101 to 100 while in the South-West a rating of 94 fell over the two-year period to 93.

In the Eastern region, relative wealth fell from 94 to 91 while in the East Midlands it dropped from 94 to 91 and in the West Midlands — heartland of Britain's manufacturing industry — from 91 to 89.

In the North-East, wealth per head fell from 83 to 80, in the North West from 93 to 91,

and in Merseyside from 75 to 71.

Publication of the figures comes as Mr Caborn pilots legislation through Parliament to establish nine regional development agencies in England to co-ordinate job creation and economic development.

The Commons environment committee recently urged the Government to give them more powers to oversee training, tourism, and distribute grants to foreign companies setting up factories.

Mr Caborn said: "The [Eurostat] figures substantiate the case for... powerful development agencies and a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to economic under-performance in the English regions. They clearly demonstrate the performance of the regions has worsened."

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Stephen Lawrence inquiry told of neo-Nazi links as police at stabbing scene are accused of lying

Youths 'laughed at murder'

David Pollard

A CAR containing five laughing white youths — three of whom had been involved in previous racist activities — was seen by police driving up the street where the black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, lay bleeding to death, the inquiry into his murder was told yesterday.

Sergeant Nigel Clement said that he had noted part of the registration number and had radioed for the car to be stopped. But it was not. A white van was seen later, carrying a red Vauxhall Astra and took the details of the driver and his passenger.

In cross-examination, Ian McDonald QC, asked Sgt Clement if he had been aware that the driver, David Copley,

had been convicted of threatening behaviour in connection with the 1991 attack on Nathan Adams, 14, and his brother, Rolan, 15. Rolan died from a knife wound after the assault by 15 youths.

His passenger, Keiran Highland, was said by McDonald, a leading member of a neo-Nazi group called NTO or Nazi Turnout, which frequented the Wild Fowler pub in Thamesmead, south-east London — a known haunt of racists.

Sgt Clement replied: "What you're telling me now is the first indication of that."

Mr McDonald, representing Stephen's friend, Duwayne Brooks, who was with him at the time of the killing, then in the car on the night.

He said Jason Gooley had also been convicted of an offence in the Adams incident.

"I was never aware of that," Sgt Clement replied. The Adams brothers had been walking home from a youth club on the Thamesmead estate near Iltham, where Stephen was killed, in April, 1993.

Five other youths were charged with Stephen's murder but none were convicted. Sgt Clement returned to the inquiry yesterday after being accused last week of lying about the time he arrived at the scene.

This allegation led the chairman, Sir William Macpherson, to adjourn the questioning of police witnesses to allow advance warning of criticism.

Yesterday he and two other officers, including Inspector Steven Groves, in charge of the murder scene, were also accused of lying.



Police insist that Lawrence (left) was given first aid by officers at the scene, despite suggestions to the contrary

prickly exchanges, Michael Mansfield QC, for the Lawrence family, told Inspector Groves: "This inquiry cannot rely on a single word you're saying. Do you think you're totally unreliable?" — "No, Sir."

Sgt Clement, a member of the territorial support group, claimed his van had arrived at the scene at about 10.45pm. But a police "computer aided despatch" assigning his van to the scene recorded the time as an hour later.

been denied "because you didn't want to dirty your hands with the blood of a black man" — "I find that extremely disappointing."

Mr Mansfield's cross-examination led to a rebuke from the chairman for unnecessary piling on.

Nightlife equality

Club ladies' nights ruled sexist

Kamal Ahmed Media Correspondent

IT COULD mark the end of rum and blackcurrant and dancing around handbags. Ladies' nights, the nightclub industry's effort to encourage women into clubs with cheap tickets and drinks, have been banned by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

In a letter sent to nightclubs, the EOC, the government body charged with ensuring fair treatment of men and women, said the special evenings contravened the Sex Discrimination Act and should be halted. The EOC said it acted after receiving nearly 100 complaints over the past year from men angry at having to pay extra for their pint of lager.

The ruling came to light after Channel 5 was told to pull advertisements for two clubs offering cut-price admission to women. The order came from the Independent Television Commission which received a complaint that the adverts were sexist.



Fun while it lasted... special nightclub discounts for women only must end to comply with the Sex Discrimination Act

the EOC, which said it was discriminatory against men to offer drinks at half price or free entry to women.

"We have received a lot of complaints about this from men, and we are duty bound to investigate when there is a complaint about sexual discrimination," said Kim Scanlon, head of the social advice team of the EOC which deals with complaints. "We do not

want to get heavy-handed about this, but the act was passed by Parliament. You can imagine that for men who go to clubs regularly a 50 difference between ticket prices is a significant one."

In the adverts on Channel 5's text service, the Gass Club in Leicester offered "Ladies free B4 11pm/Gents £10" and Legends nightclub in Essex offered "Admission £5, Ladies

4 Price". Both adverts have now been pulled.

Nightclub owners, who have been struggling to get rid of the image of thick-necked bouncers and men's drunkenness, responded with incredulity to the ban.

Tony O'Neill, manager of Golds nightclub in Leicester, said: "These are a load of middle-aged stuffed shirts who have probably never

been in a nightclub in their lives." He said he was still planning women-only evenings once a month. "We have a stripper who goes the full monty. The women love it, they're screaming."

Ms Scanlon said the EOC was working in partnership with the nightclub industry so that the legislation was understood. "We don't want to take anyone to court," she

TV green series grossly unfair

Channel 4 must apologise over programmes that distorted truth

Kamal Ahmed Media Correspondent

CHANNEL 4 will make an on-screen apology about one of its most controversial programmes after a television watchdog roundly condemned it as distorted and misleading.

The Independent Television Commission said that the Against Nature series, which accused the environmental movement of being akin to the Third Reich, had selectively edited interviews to give a deceptive picture of

green issues. In an unusual move which revealed the anger of the ITC, the regulatory body said that Channel 4 must apologise to Peter Melchett, the chief executive of Greenpeace, Tony Juniper, campaign director of Friends of the Earth, Barbara Meas of the Pan-African Wildlife Conservation Network, and Norman Myers of Green College, Oxford.

All had their views distorted by the series which claimed that the environmental lobby in developed nations was trying to keep the rest of the world under-developed by

opposing projects such as dam schemes and other technological advances.

"I have never experienced, in more than 20 years of television, an interview in which I said one thing, then was cut to make it seem as if I had said something else," Lord Melchett said. "The programmes were inaccurate, anti-environmentalist propaganda."

Writing to David Scott, managing director of Channel 4, Lord Melchett said the ITC agreed that he had been "deceived" about the series' purpose. Greenpeace had been told that the series would "broadly consider scientific advancement, population and the environment". Friends of the Earth were equally scathing about the

series broadcast last November, saying they had been stitched up by the programme-makers. RDF Television, "The series was badly made, and thoroughly shoddy in its use of facts," said Ian Willmore, FoE spokesman.

The ITC said the Against Nature series had no factual inaccuracies, but that Channel 4 had broken rules on fair interviews and giving adequate warning about the subject matter. Channel 4 apologised and said it "regretted any unfairness".

Judges 'punish' Lightning strike

Stuart Miller

EVEN Peter Alliss would have struggled to find words to describe this shot.

Lying in the rough 140 yards from the green behind a 10ft high copse, Anthony Lightning pulled out his eight-iron and went for glory over the trees.

Except he did not quite make it. His heavily sliced shot hit a tree, deflected at right angles and hit a player standing almost 90 yards away on the next fairway.

It could happen to anybody who ventured on to a fairway. But yesterday shock waves were sent through clubhouses after the Court of Appeal ruled that golfers were liable for injuries caused by wayward shots — no matter how unlikely the circumstances of the accident.

Mr Lightning was found liable to pay damages to John Pearson, a lorry driver, aged 46. He was hit in the right eye and has not been able to play the game again. So severe was the damage to his sight that Mr Pearson lost his HGV licence.

Three appeal judges upheld

the decision of a Southampton county court judge. The damages will be decided at a later hearing in Southampton, where both men live.

After the ruling, Peter Shergold, Mr Lightning's solicitor, said it would affect all golfers and their approach to playing any shot when other players were around.

"The dilemma will be whether to get on with the game and abide by the rules or to wait until the area is completely clear of other players so that they do not set themselves up to the risk of being sued."

Mr Lightning, aged 45, was playing the 10th hole at Dunwood Manor golf club in Romsey, Hampshire, in October 1992 and had mislaid his tee shot.

The court heard he had known Mr Pearson was on the ninth fairway but felt there was no danger because he was at right angles to the line of play and so far away.

After mislaid the ball he shouted "fore", but Mr Pearson did not hear and was "poleaxed" by the shot.

The judges ruled that while the risk was relatively small, it was enough to render Mr Lightning liable.

News in brief

Infatuation led to boy's suicide

A SCHOOLBOY threw himself off the roof of his home because he could not cope with his infatuation for his girlfriend, an inquest at Winchester was told yesterday. Richard Lovell, aged 15, left five suicide notes suggesting he feared the relationship would end. He climbed on the roof of the house then fell head first on to a stone path below, a police officer said. He died in hospital five days later. The Mid-Hampshire coroner, Graham Short, recorded a verdict of suicide.

His mother, Susan Lovell, said Richard started going out with the girl just before Christmas 1996. They had broken up last May but resumed their relationship shortly before Richard died. Mr Short said he had read Richard's diaries and it was clear that he feared the relationship was going to break up again. Notes written on the night he died made clear he planned to take his own life. "I don't think the girl concerned should blame herself for what has happened."

Bankrupt hid assets

DISGRACED businessman Terry Ramsden, once one of Britain's wealthiest men, admitted yesterday he had concealed property and shares after his companies crashed owing £100 million. Ramsden, aged 46, who is bankrupt, pleaded guilty at the Old Bailey to not disclosing his own £2 million shares.

He was jailed until May 5 when he is to be sentenced. Ramsden made a fortune as an international bond trader, but lost it because of gambling losses of about £100 million, when he was Britain's top racehorse owner.

He went to America, leaving huge debts, and was arrested there in 1993. Ramsden, from London, was brought back to Britain where he received a two-year suspended prison sentence for fraudulent trading involving £90 million.

Absolutely Friends

THE American sitcom Friends is to feature cameo roles for Jennifer Saunders and June Whitfield as the crew film in London this week. The pair from the BBC comedy Absolutely Fabulous visited a north London studio where filming on Friends has been continuing since Monday.

Also featuring in the hour-long episode, to be aired in June on Sky1, will be pop star Louise, and British actors Tom Conti and Hugh Laurie. Last week Virgin boss Richard Branson and the Duchess of York filmed scenes for the comedy, which centres on a group of 20-something New York pals.

Violin's sale sets record

A STRADIVARI violin (right) was sold yesterday for £247,500 — the highest price ever paid for a musical instrument, according to Christie's in London.

The violin, made in 1727 by Antonio Stradivari, is believed to have once belonged to the violinist Rudolph Kreutzer and later to the violin-maker Nicolas Lupot.

The successful bidder was the violinist and London dealer Chaim Lazarov. The previous record for a violin was also a Stradivari known as The Mendelssohn, sold at Christie's in 1990 for £202,000.

"This violin will soon be heard all over the world," said Mr Lazarov.



Everett widow sues

THE former wife of the late Kenny Everett told a judge yesterday she was "horrified and appalled" when *Woman's Own* magazine broke its promise not to publish an article about her relationship with the outrageous gay broadcaster without her approval. Lee Everett-Alkin said that after Everett's death from Aids in April 1995 she agreed to be interviewed by the magazine — which she had been brought up to believe was "knighting patterns and niceness" — after being assured she would have the right of veto.

When a draft was sent for her approval, she rejected it because it concentrated on the negative aspects of her life, and made it sound as though she came to hate him. She was "very, very upset" when the article was published, she told Mr Justice Bennett in the High Court in London.

Mrs Everett-Alkin, of Stratfield, Berkshire, is suing IPC Magazines for breach of contract and breach of confidence over the allegedly unauthorised publication, claiming about £20,000 — the sort of fee she could have expected if she had taken her story to a tabloid newspaper — for injuries to her feelings, emotional distress and damage to her reputation among Everett's family, friends and fans. The publishers claim she gave her consent for the article. The hearing continues today.

Earprints fail to convict

EARPRINT evidence used for the first time in a trial in Britain has been rejected by a Liverpool crown court jury. It had been claimed that two earprints left by a burglar at two homes belonged to Mark Smith, aged 28, of Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside. Nicholas Clark, defending, had called the method of investigation by earprint experts "Blue Peter art", involving jigsaw puzzles, "glit-pen and sticky-back plastic". He described the findings as "pseudo-science fiction."

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The dirt dredged through here — the illegitimacy revelation, the Roman Polanski rape case, the associations with Heidi Fleiss and other unsavouries, the paternity suits — strongly suggest some excessive costs in the pact Jack Nicholson, who calls himself 'Dr Devil', seems to have made.

Books, G2 page 8

Russia 'stares into abyss'

James Meek in Moscow

NEARLY three-quarters of Russia's budget will go on servicing its debts unless radical policy changes are made, Russia's prime minister is warning, Sergei Kiriyenko, warned yesterday.

In an apocalyptic sermon to the upper house of parliament yesterday, he warned regional leaders of the disastrous state of the economy.

The little-known, 35-year-old, nominated for the post by President Boris Yeltsin but still to win the backing of the communist-patriotic bloc in parliament, said a quarter of Russians lived below subsistence level.

In a harsh attack on his predecessor, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who regularly claimed that the economy was growing, Mr Kiriyenko said: "There is practically not a single person in Russia today who would feel, as an individual, the economic growth of

which the previous government spoke."

Russia's foreign debt stood at more than \$78 billion in January. Rescheduling delayed repayment until this year, and in 2003 Moscow is due to start paying back the billions borrowed by the Soviet Union.

The backlog of unpaid wages has grown inexorably. The private sector owes employees \$5.7 billion, while the state sector owes \$700 million in wages. The backlog of pensions in both sectors has reached \$2.8 billion.

Meanwhile, the popular daily newspaper *Kommunist*, *Kavkaz Pravda* reported yesterday that the presidential administration was secretly spending millions of pounds on an exclusive leisure centre, including indoor tennis courts, weights and a sauna inside the Kremlin.

Yesterday's speech was the acting prime minister's first big policy statement. He echoed the complaints of his natural opponents about the impoverishment of Russia.

Living on the never never



Kiriyenko: "The principle is to live within our means"

- Russia's foreign debt is \$78 billion;
- Privatised industries owe their employees \$5.7 billion;
- The state sector owes its workers \$700 million;
- The backlog of pensions in both sectors has reached \$2.8 billion. The Russian Pension Fund currently has only 71 per cent of the money it needs.

while setting the stage for the Thatcherite measures which he will undoubtedly pursue to bring government spending into line with earnings.

He wooed communist-patriots with a pledge that the state would not sell its controlling share in big monopolies such as the gas giant Gazprom and the federal electricity system,

and promised an end to the Russian government's "collective irresponsibility".

Mr Yeltsin responded to parliamentary demands for consultation on the nomination with an offer to meet the speakers of both houses in his country residence today.

The lower house, the Duma, is due to vote on the prime

minister's nomination tomorrow. If it rejects his candidacy, Mr Yeltsin can reshuffle his name two more times.

If the Duma turns him down on all three occasions, the president can dissolve parliament and call new elections.

The whiff of crisis in the corridors of power stems from the fact that until a prime minister is confirmed, the Russian constitution does not make clear who would take over as head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces if Mr Yeltsin died or became incapacitated.

The Duma speaker, Gennady Seleznev, said deputies might debate the nomination tomorrow and vote on Wednesday.

Yegor Stroyev, the upper house speaker, said yesterday that the speakers, Mr Yeltsin and Mr Kiriyenko would "definitely reach an agreement" today at the president's residence.

Mr Stroyev said the upper house, the Federation Council, had no constitutional right to nominate its own candidate.

Meeting on Monday, the Communists and two strong allied parliamentary groups seemed to come to no firm conclusion as to whether they would vote against Mr Kiriyenko or abstain.

But yesterday a statement was released in the name of the same alliance calling Mr Kiriyenko "an incompetent, third-rate bureaucrat".

The Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, has taken care to attack Mr Yeltsin's nominee as inexperienced, rather than as an implacable ideological enemy of the communist-patriots, strengthening the suspicion that he has no intention of giving the president an opportunity to dissolve parliament by opposing Mr Kiriyenko.

The Russian media, which were struggling to find anything controversial to say about the obscure former businessman from Nizhny Novgorod, picked up a report yesterday from a German newspaper saying that Mr Kiriyenko had once flirted with Scientology.

World news in brief

Mandela aide says coup report 'flawed'

A REPORT by South Africa's military which implicated leading figures in the ruling party in a plot to overthrow the government was flawed and generally false, a spokesman for President Nelson Mandela said yesterday.

Joel Netshitenzhe said elements of the report might be true and would be investigated further but the overall premise of the report — that top African National Congress officials in the military and government were involved in a plot to destabilise the country — was wrong.

Another spokesman, Parks Mankahlana, said a judicial commission appointed by Mr Mandela last Friday had found problems with the entire compilation process. Mr Mandela received the commission's report on Wednesday. — AP, Pretoria.

Briton hurt by mine blast

A BRITISH diplomat was injured in Cambodia yesterday when two landmines exploded under a helicopter carrying Western journalists, diplomats and government troops as it landed at a remote temple which has been handed over to troops by Khmer Rouge defectors. No one was killed but three people — including Lawrence Pickup, deputy head of Britain's diplomatic mission — were injured. All were discharged after medical treatment.

The Soviet-built Mi-8 transport helicopter, carrying at least 44 people, was supposed to land at a helipad but came down in a mine field in strong winds. — AP, Cambodia.

EU envoys to visit Tibet

CHINA has agreed to allow European Union envoys to spend a week in Tibet looking at the human rights situation there, a British Foreign Office minister said yesterday.

Derek Fitchett said he hoped the delegation, consisting of the British, Austrian and Luxembourg ambassadors in Beijing, would be able to meet religious leaders and ordinary Tibetans during the visit next month. The EU pressed for the visit because of its concerns about repression of Buddhist clergy and the reported large-scale migration of ethnic Han Chinese into Tibet, an autonomous region of China. — Reuters.

I'm no fraidy cat, says Ramos

PRESIDENT Fidel Ramos of the Philippines said yesterday that he was no "franky cat" and would continue to mingle with crowds despite the police reports that a professional killer is stalking him. He also ruled out wearing a bullet-proof vest.

The president rode in an open-top vehicle and shook hands with crowds when he visited southern Mindanao to campaign for the House Speaker, José de Venecia, the ruling party's candidate for the May presidential election. — Reuters, Manila.

Clinton caught in holy row

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton has been criticised by the head of the archdiocese of Philadelphia for receiving communion during a mass on his tour of Africa.

Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua said Mr Clinton probably had not realised he is barred from receiving the Holy Eucharist, which Roman Catholics believe is the actual body of Christ. Non-Catholics are allowed to receive communion only in exceptional circumstances. "I believe he did something unlawful, but I don't believe he did it intentionally," Cardinal Bevilacqua said of the mass in South Africa's Soweto township. — AP, Philadelphia.

Cairo holds messiah group

EGYPTIAN authorities have detained 29 suspected members of a cult which believes the country will be flooded in the first three days of April, an interior ministry statement said yesterday. It said the group believes that 48-year-old Baha' al-Eddin Ahmed — one of the arrested — is the messiah. The statement added that those being held were to be interrogated. It was not immediately clear what the charges were. — Reuters, Cairo.

Botswana gets new leader

BOTSWANA'S new president, Festus Mogae, used his inaugural speech yesterday to promote the country's "phenomenal development" but also warned against complacency after 18 stable years under his predecessor.

"We should not delude ourselves into thinking that this is a smooth slide to prosperity," Mr Mogae, aged 58, told a rally of supporters. Ketumile Masire, aged 73, resigned as president to let Mr Mogae run as an incumbent to improve the ruling party's chances in next year's elections. — AP, Gaborone.

Riding to the rescue

A WOMAN in a wheelchair who moved into the shade cast by the wall of a block of flats in New York to cool off became an unwitting hero when a toddler fell from a third-floor window into her lap. Stroke victim Barbara Jones, aged 31, received a glancing blow to the head as Adonis Gomez fell on to her, and then rolled on to pavement. The boy, who had bounced out of the window while playing on a sofa, was in a critical condition. — AP, New York.

Tree tribute to beach lifestyle



A boy examines tree logs that have been painted to resemble Australian surf lifesavers and woman wearing old-fashioned bathing suits at an exhibit at the Melbourne International Flower Show. PHOTOGRAPH: WILL BURGESS

Iraq joins in April Fool fun

IN IRAQ, it appears, they enjoy an April Fool's joke too. A newspaper owned by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday raised hopes yesterday on page one that UN sanctions were about to end and only to dash them on page two. An article in the Babil newspaper quoted President Clinton as saying: "It is time for lifting the sanctions." But when the story turned to the inside page, it revealed that it was "only an April Fool's joke. It is the beginning of spring. Many happy returns." — AP, Baghdad.

"If academics come up with an idea and get enough heavyweights to back it, then it becomes real — that's what they've done with Crabtree."
Vivek Chaudhary observes.

G2 page 5

1498 IL CENACOLO - LEONARDO DA VINCI 1998



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Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* will appear on an Italian postage stamp to be released on Saturday to mark the quincentenary of the painting's completion on April 4 1498. Da Vinci painted the fresco, *Il Cenacolo*, in the refectory of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.

ETA bombs Basque politicians' homes

Adela Gooch in Madrid

A WOMAN was injured yesterday as the Basque separatist guerrilla group ETA intensified its campaign against soft targets in the Basque country, bombing the homes of local politicians from the governing conservative party.

Bombs exploded at the homes of four Popular Party councillors early yesterday. The first went off just after midnight in the doorway of town councillor Mari Carmen Iruretagoyena's house in Fuenterrabia, near the French border, injuring his sister.

It was followed by other explosions in the coastal resort of San Sebastián and the frontier town of Iruñ. The bombs were placed in hallways and entrances to apartment buildings.

The attacks follow a police

crackdown which led to the arrest last week of 11 members of a key ETA terrorist unit in the Basque country. It was a severe blow to the group, now thought to have been reduced to one active unit in the region.

But yesterday's bombings signalled that PP councillors and their families remained easy targets for ETA, which has killed since last July. ETA justifies the campaign on the grounds that PP officials are the direct descendants of dictator General Franco, whose regime brutally repressed Basque nationalism.

The government, facing the impossible task of protecting Spain's 24,699 PP councillors, warned yesterday that security measures should be taken.

The campaign of violence has led to an outburst of public anger at ETA, which has been responsible for 766 deaths in the past 30 years.

UN arms embargo unlikely to halt latest Balkan crisis

The big powers that turned a blind eye to Kosovo once before must now find a way to halt Milosevic's aggression, writes Ian Traynor

MORE than 10 years after Slobodan Milosevic came to power in Serbia and set about redrawing the map of the Balkans in blood, the West is still labouring to come up with an effective and coherent policy towards a leader who has proved himself the most dangerous figure in post-cold war Europe.

The decision yesterday by the United Nations Security Council to reimpose the arms embargo on Yugoslavia that was lifted two years ago following the US-brokered Bosnia peace accord is a slap on the wrist. It will have little impact on the Kosovo crisis in the southern Balkans, where Mr Milosevic's well-armed henchmen are digging in for a fight with the increasingly radicalised and frustrated Albanian majority.

Kosovo is Yugoslavia's unfinished business. It was the card Mr Milosevic played first in the battle he lost to control as much as possible of old Yugoslavia. Caught up throughout the 1990s in the Croatian and Bosnian wars, the big powers preferred to turn a blind eye to the "Albanian question", and such neglect is now coming home to roost.

Western policy-makers and analysts at a recent conference on the Balkans were profoundly pessimistic and had little idea what to do about Mr Milosevic and Kosovo. A leading UN peacekeeping strategist said: "We haven't come up with any proposals to prevent a conflict in Kosovo."

Most agreed that a full-scale conflict there would dwarf even Bosnia in its grimness, its potential to draw in neighbouring countries and its capacity to sow tension between the international powers.

The Bosnian bloodbath triggered the worst crisis between the US and Europe since Nato's foundation, commented one west European ambassador. The rift over Kosovo could be worse still, he said.

A former Western ambassador to Yugoslavia believed that in the end Kosovo — Serbia's southern province bordering Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro — would be carved up between the Serbs and the Albanians. "In the long term it's hard to see how to keep Kosovo locked into Serbia."

A senior European diplomat repeatedly used a new buzzword — "re-aggregation" — to describe Western policy

towards the region. He argued that a new incarnation of Yugoslavia, constructed more loosely than its two antecedents, was the aim of Western policy. But this is a non-starter in Slovenia and Croatia, the westernmost and wealthiest parts of former Yugoslavia.

Croatia's elderly nationalist president, Franjo Tudjman, is suffering intestinal cancer and his headline defence minister, Gojko Susak, is believed to be in the terminal stages of lung cancer. However, Western hopes that Croatia after Mr Tudjman and Mr Susak will be more favourably disposed towards a reconstituted Yugoslavia look like wishful thinking.



United Nations Security Council members vote yesterday in favour of a resolution on an arms embargo against Yugoslavia to drive home the need for a peaceful solution to the Kosovo crisis. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTY LEDERHANDLER

And Kosovo's Albanians, the "last prisoners" of Yugoslavia, also want out. They have the fastest growing and youngest population in Europe: they outnumber local Serbs nine to one and the imbalance is on the rise. An estimated six Albanians are born for every Serb born in rump Yugoslavia.

Although Kosovo is a poor region, it has been fought over for centuries. It was on the Kosovo plain outside Pristina in the 14th century that the Turks vanquished the

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New perils in Israel

It only needs a spark

WHOEVER killed the Second Engineer matters much less than the likely consequences. These could be as severe as those which have almost destroyed the Middle East peace process since Israeli agents killed the No. 1 of the Hamas terrorist organisation two years ago. There is a difference between the killings. Yesterday's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to deny that Israeli intelligence had anything to do with the death of Muhi al-Din Sharif, shot dead on the West Bank on Sunday. He may even be telling the truth. In January 1996, Israeli sources were only too happy to nudge and wink after "the Engineer" Yahya Ayash was blown up in Gaza, in a killing which led to a wave of retaliatory suicide attacks — and to the electoral victory of the Likud party and Mr Netanyahu himself. But in the situation today, where a single spark may start a fire, a denial has little relevance.

Even without this killing, the latest US initiative is already in a desperate state of dither. The administration cannot decide whether to continue playing along with Mr Netanyahu's strategy of minimal concessions which can be claimed to keep the peace process "alive" — yesterday's Madeleine Albright was trying to make the best of a qualified offer of a further "third pullback" in eventual "final stage" negotiations. The Israeli acceptance, 20 years late, of UN Resolution 425 on withdrawal from Lebanon — but only subject to "security arrangements" — is a more transparent

diversion. Or should Bill Clinton go public with a plan which would shift the burden of decision back onto the Israelis? Such a plan — the now famous "13 per cent pullback" of Israeli forces from the West Bank — does not appear to have been formally delivered by the US envoy Dennis Ross. Nor does Mr Netanyahu's supposed counter-offer (which he too has formally denied) of 11 per cent. Yasser Arafat seems inclined to accept the US proposal though it falls far short of Palestinian demands.

This is all shadow boxing: no one really supposes that two per cent is the difference between peace and a breakdown. The argument is not even primarily about the conditions attached to any offer: there is little real difference between Israel's insistence on Palestinian "reciprocity" and the US formula of "parallel actions" to which Mr Arafat would have to sign up. The issue is rather which side is more willing to risk a total breakdown of the peace process. Mr Arafat from his weaker position continues to make the greater concessions: Mr Netanyahu pleads weakness in the shape of domestic hawks, but plays from what he perceives as strength.

Whose interests are served by the inflammatory death of Hamas's No. 2? The suggestion that the PA might have arranged his death to demonstrate its commitment to Israeli "security" defies commonsense. No one knows better than Mr Arafat that in a real explosion his Palestinian authority would be the first victim, and he has devoted a lot of effort recently to seeking to "normalise" Hamas. For any Israeli leader to countenance an action which could trigger a return to terrorist bombings also seems an act of huge folly. Yet the deed has been done, and it can only have been committed with the intent of wrecking what remains of the peace process.

Whether from motives of despair or destruction, such forces exist on both sides. The signal which this sends should be felt everywhere and particularly in Washington. Mr Clinton is said to be unconvinced that an open clash with Mr Netanyahu is good tactics — but since when did a compromise plan amount to confrontation? Next month's visit to Israel by Tony Blair should become part of a concerted effort. If quiet diplomacy will not break the deadlock, a louder version must be tried.

Irvine's law

Accounting for reform

LORD Irvine was unequivocal. The civil and criminal justice systems were under serious strain, access to legal services in crisis. The courts needed modernising and the judiciary made more representative (more women, more members of ethnic minorities, younger judges). There was growing dissatisfaction with outdated, secretive and elitist arrangements for appointing judges. But Labour had a plan to deal with these crises: both a ministry of justice and an independent judicial appointments commission. Alas, all that is wrong was that these words were written for the Guardian by the Lord Chancellor six years ago. Labour, which only adopted these long-advocated reforms in the 1990s, abandoned the creation of a ministry of justice before the election and dropped the independent judicial appointments system after it. Lord Irvine decreed last year that he had decided "not to proceed with further work" on the appointments commission. Enter Austin Mitchell, Labour MP.

Mr Mitchell's 10 minute rule bill will not change the system but does remind Labour

of its earlier thirst for reform. The MP is right to describe Lord Irvine's office as "a medieval relic". It was Mr Mitchell who started the first round of legal reform a decade ago with a private member's bill that ultimately resulted in solicitors losing their monopoly over conveyancing and barristers their rights of audience monopoly in the courts. But the Chancellor's Department remains untouched and so does the 200-year-old Home Office. Both major parties have made the same error of leaving law administration reform to its legal members. Most resist change to the cosy system once inside. No one suggests doctors must always be in charge of the health system. The same principle should apply to law. Lord Hailsham, with 2,500 judicial appointments under his control, smugly declared the system was "almost as foolproof as it could be made".

Minor reforms have been made: judicial vacancies are now advertised; a few antiquated restrictive practices modified. But order and justice still need separating. The Home Office should stick to order (police, prison, probation) and the Lord Chancellor's office to justice (law reform, legal aid, court administration). But both need to be in the Commons, directly accountable to MPs. Lord Irvine could still have his wool-sack but not, as a junior minister, his cabinet seat.

Teflon zone

But it may just work

ANYONE doubting the Government's determination to change Britain's image in the world may have to eat their words by the end of this week. Yesterday Robin Cook named 33 people for Panel 2000 — from

Stella McCartney to the ubiquitous Peter Mandelson. Their job is to project "the truth and reality" about modern Britain abroad. At the same time (through what appears to be unintended piece of serendipity) yesterday was also chosen as the day to launch *powerhouse24*. This is a celebration of British creative talent housed in four inflated silver drums (not to be mistaken for domes) at Horse Guards Parade in Whitehall. Neither of these events should be confused with what is happening today when Tony Blair will announce the names of the first 200 so-called Millennium Products. This coincides with the installation of the Millennium Dome's Teflon-coated roof, the biggest in the world.

It is easy to be cynical about the Government's attempt to rebrand Britain. Of course there is a strong element of hype in it. Of course there is a political dimension. Of course it may be part of a distorted vision to navigate a post-industrial Britain, buffeted by the strong pound, into new creative pastures. It may be a bit of all of these things, but it is also emerging as a coordinated exercise being pursued with deadly seriousness. And it may just work. There is no reason why the marketing techniques successfully applied by companies shouldn't work also for countries. If they don't there is little lost and if they do, much to gain.

There are even signs that the initially sceptical attitude of so many citizens towards the Dome is mellowing as it rises out of the Greenwich wasteland — three weeks ahead of schedule as it happens — and is seen to be generating lots of new ideas. This won't stop people knocking the project and all associated with it. But if the Government can succeed in making cynicism pay then it may yield unexpected dividends.

Letters to the Editor

On redress, Guardian-style

ME AND my friend Jan like to think of ourselves as typical Guardian women — good haircuts, studious spectacles, formidable intelligence — so we are well used to finding nothing on your Style page for us to wear. But at last you have cracked it (April 1). Loose floppy trousers ending just below the knee, argyle ankle socks and high heels would be wonderful for us to cling on before tripping off for another shift at the hospital, or clearing up after the kids. Thanks Guardian, although, having seen the date, perhaps you were not serious? Pauline Rags, Essex.

TWICE recently I have written to you, using a first-class stamp, only to see the correspondence on the relevant article published the next day, the day before mine could have appeared. Should I get a modem or a fax machine, or should I give up writing to you? Markie Pawson, Street, Somerset.

SOME days it seems the only way to get a letter published in the Guardian is to be a celebrity, an MP or the representative of an organisation. Dr John Davies, National Organisation for Correspondence Rights for All People, Kirby-in-Cleveland, N Yorks.

BRILLIANT. Hiding the April Fool piece on the Letters page, placing a ludicrously named organisation "the Institute for Accuracy in Academia" next to the silly claim "whose staff have been through every word of my book" is genius. But won't Paul Johnson be miffed when he reads it? Anthony Purcell, Chelmsford, Essex.

In search of democracy

HUGO Young (Political payments) No problem — provided we know who's paying. March 31 is naïve in thinking business funding of political parties does not matter. We will never know who is buying influence. The political system is rapidly degenerating to a state where only those with huge funds can afford to take part. Politicians increasingly only act in the interests of the rich and the result is an exclusive system in which democracy is replaced by plutocracy.

In the US, less than half the electorate votes in presidential elections and only a third in congressional elections. For most ordinary people it is simply not worth bothering to vote. New Labour was elected to revive a sleaze-ridden democratic system. It is doing nothing of the sort. Trevor Fisher, Stafford.

HOW can Harriet Harman be so certain as to which precise policies voters "overwhelmingly supported" or "resoundingly rejected"? (We will redistribute, March 31). Elections are a blunt instrument used to decide which party shall form the government. The claim that every

one of its policies has been fully endorsed is spurious. Putting a cross on a ballot paper may be determined by the simplest of reasoning ("I have always voted this way") or by a complex of policy, personality and persuasion. The Tories were not resoundingly rejected in 1997 and which Labour policies were overwhelmingly supported is a matter of conjecture. Dennis Johnson, Bedford.

VOTERS who voted for measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion did not at the same time "vote against high tax hand-outs for the poor". Just because Labour politicians have given up on fair taxation, please don't assume that voters have. Jeremy Marsh, London.

I AM relieved I am not the only person in the UK who finds the idea of an elected mayor an anathema in principle. A quick look at France, Australia and the US will verify Robert Clarke's assertion (Letters, March 27) about the opportunities for more corruption. There is an even greater, if subtler, danger from a time-

limited "supremo" trying to leave his or her mark, each leaving an expensive icon behind. A further question is the cost. How many staff and specialist advisers will be needed? Who will service the assembly? Londoners are being forced to swallow greater centralisation rather than being allowed to help with their own government. Paul Harrington, London.

THOUGH London Docklands Development Corporation is finally no more, many will still use it to justify the Thatcher experiment. But, without the existence of the Thames Barrier, the Docklands project would have been unthinkable. I wonder whether the free-market fundamentalists can appreciate the irony of the great memorial to Thatcher being made possible by a democratic body and a political system she despised and ultimately destroyed. Rob Kenyon, London.

COULD there be any truth in the rumour that Tony Blair's candidate for Mayor of London is Rupert Murdoch? T Was, London.

Burden fat kids have to bear

I WAS amazed that Professor Peter Smith (Cerebral advert links fatness to bullying, March 31) stated that he didn't know of any evidence to prove that one of the most common causes of bullying in schools is being fat. He may well have researched bullying for nine years, but I've been at school and in college for the past 15 years and the vast majority of bullying I've come across has been directed at overweight children.

Shy children and those with special needs are also susceptible, but then again many have been bullied because they were too short, too tall, had the wrong colour hair or spoke in a funny accent. Could Peter Smith find me five overweight children who had not been bullied? I agree with Kellogg's claim that a quarter of all calls to the Anti-Bullying Campaign make a link between obesity and bullying. In fact, I am sur-

prised the number is that low. Although I don't believe that Kellogg's have all the answers — I think they are being more realistic than the experts. Helen Mantle, East Grinstead.

SO children put on weight television they watch (TV linked to young tubbies, March 29). How present of the BBC to name its latest children's TV hit, Teletubbies. Bob Hays, Balfax.



Here's an idea to kick around

SPORT seems to have lost its grace and goodwill: violence attends football matches. Could it be that, in this game the most animal-like part of man, the lower limbs, are dominant? In handball, netball, cricket, rugby, hockey or tennis, a more balanced activity takes place and the spectators are not roused to violence. A football is a

sphere, similar in size to a human head: Dantes used the skull of an enemy as a football. Our earth itself is a sphere, and it was a sacred symbol. Kicking a sphere may cause contempt of this symbol. We need sport and games, but it may be wise to sponsor football less. Sibylla Alexander, Galashiels.

Birth date

FN SPENCER says she had her baby on the NHS on February 17, 1948 (Letters, March 24). My son was born in Broadgreen hospital, Liverpool on January 1, 1948 in similar conditions. However, we paid the hospital £4.10 shillings for the two-week stay. This was the contribution from my National Insurance stamp and that of my husband's, who had returned from the war in 1947 and was working. I still have the receipt. F M Radcliff, Preston.

Gland to be gay

YOUR article about the prostate gland (Search for the prostate, March 31) was billed as "everything you need to know". It was, in fact, a classic example of prostatephobia. Full of negative stereotypes, it discussed all the troubles associated with this part of the male anatomy without once mentioning the delights. As a sex gland, the prostate rivals the clitoris. During anal intercourse, stimulation can induce a sensational orgasm. It is time the medical profession abandoned its homophobic prejudices and started telling the full story about one of the hidden wonders of the male body. Peter Tatchell, London.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied: please include a full postal address. We may edit letters. The Country Diary is on page 10.

Tube beats the train when it comes to noise on the line

FOR A really noisy journey, Jonathan Cockburn (Letters, April 1) should forget the world of train-based mobile phone users, where you just can't rely on the frequency of the interruption, and head for the Circle Line when he is next at Paddington. Here he will be regaled by a loud synthesised voice spewing out an unrelenting stream of non-information. Sample: "The next station will be Great Portland Street"; followed five seconds later by: "This is Great Portland Street." That's right — the tube didn't suddenly veer off.

last 100 years, anyone managed to travel by tube is nothing short of remarkable. Matthew Carse, London.

IT'S amazing how well it works. Baffled overseas tourists no longer clutter every station looking puzzled, but head straight to their destination, having instantly learned English. Nervous commuters, having endured years of uncertainty, can relax as they are reassured every few moments that they haven't got on the wrong train, or got off at the wrong stop. How, over the

UNDERSTAND Jonathan Cockburn's irritation, but he needs to be a little more tolerant. For some people, a train journey presents a good opportunity to return calls and do a little business. Far from going away, mobile phones are set to become ubiquitous — our grandchildren will be astonished that once, if you wanted to speak to someone, you had to telephone a building in the hope that they were in.

As communications develop, mobile phones will increasingly be used for faxes and e-mail, but appropriate practices and standards of etiquette will emerge, just as they have done for letter-writing and for conventional telephoning. Gerald Raigh, Bedford.

Remember today's front page headline

Frustrating isn't it? Trying to remember something you read only a short while ago. Yet people with Alzheimer's might forget that they have children. Or that they're married to someone. Just imagine being that someone. Having to live with your loved one not even knowing who you are. Watching them become a different person.

Will you remember those who can't?

There are 670,000 people in Britain with some form of dementia. And many more family members are touched by it. The Alzheimer's Disease Society is here to give them the support they desperately need. But we need your help to keep doing that. Please give £20 today by filling in the form below. You could give four people information and support through our Helpline. Please don't forget about them.

I'll remember those who can't

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Goodbye cruel world

David McKie

ACCORDING to the Mail on Sunday, a company in Ohio has invented a walking tombstone. For £200 or more, an outfit which calls itself Viewlogy will build into the headstone above your grave a video unit on which can be recorded the tributes of your sorrowing friends, or even an account of your life as recorded by yourself. These electronic biographies will run

to 250 pages of text and photographs. "We've developed a memorial that tells a story," the firm's founder is quoted as saying. "People can easily spend £10,000 when a person dies, and what do they get for that? A piece of granite with a name on it." Where better to reflect on this thrilling technological breakthrough than among the bits of granite with names on them in Stoke Poges churchyard, where Gray wrote his Elegy, one of the best loved poems in the language.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me...

Not any more, he doesn't. The lea is now a well-tended field which belongs to the National Trust, with an unannounced, valiantly mounted to the poet by Wyatt.

1798) in one corner. As for the frail memorials with uncoth rhymes, imploring the passing tribute of a sigh, which so affected Gray in the 1790s, most of the words inscribed on such as remain are now beyond decipherment.

Even so, it's a tranquil spot on which to reflect on death and the art of the epitaph. Some inscriptions purport to address the passer-by on the dead person's behalf, sometimes a little brutally:

Remember man as thou pass by,
As thou art now, so once was I,
As I am now, so must thou be,
Remember Death and follow me.

I first saw this one, I think, in the churchyard in Adelcum-Eccup, Yorkshire, but there are many variants. Others simply solicit a moment of thought. Inside the church at Stoke Poges there's a 18th-century tomb with an

inscription in Norman French which, translated, says: *All those who pass by here Pray for the soul of this one William of Wymerse he had for name God to him grant true pardon So be it.*

More often, though, the words inscribed are eulogies from the mourners. The most poignant of these at Stoke Poges was written by Gray himself for the grave of his aunt, Mary Ambrose, and his mother, Dorothy Gray (died March 11, 1753, aged 67) of whom he says: "The careful tender Mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her." (Sixteen years later, Gray was interred in the same grave, though his name does not appear on it).

It may be true, as the poet says in his Elegy, that even the paths of glory lead but to the grave; yet it's clear in Stoke Poges churchyard that

distinctions of class and sex persist beyond the funeral. Everywhere wealthy men are commemorated in terms of their feats of arms, or diplomacy, or business, or scholarship, while their wives are remembered as faithful help-meets and the poor are barely remembered at all. Two grave-stones at Stoke Poges salute the lives of good and faithful servants; not as servants of God, but as servants of the Vyse family, who lived in the biggest house in the neighbourhood.

Yet it's often the simplest tombstones which tell the most powerful stories. I saw one last summer in the graveyard beside the cathedral ruins at St Andrew's in Scotland: erected by David Rodger, candlemaker of St Andrew's, it records the successive deaths of his children, Jean (January 1814, three years); Janet (one month later, two years); William (December 1815, 15 months); and Catharine (October 1817, four

months); followed in August 1819 by the death of his wife, also Catharine, aged 40. No storied tomb or animated bust could tell that story more poignantly.

And indeed, in Stoke Poges churchyard, one begins to fear the effect as a few years from now casual visitors trigger the video units out of curiosity to see what they may contain. Here, some mute, inglorious Milton, condemned to muteness no more, will be railing away against cultural standards which left his work unpublished while lavishing public attention on the work of Fiona Pitt-Kearley. There, some village Hampden will be giving a posthumous blow-by-blow account of his ceaseless struggles with the bloated and bungling bureaucrats of Buckinghamshire County Council, or Brussels. No let Viewlogy ply its ingenious trade in Ohio, and leave the world of the country churchyard in Britain to darkness, and to me.

Analysis Cyprus



Britain without the Roller 8

An island divided by hate

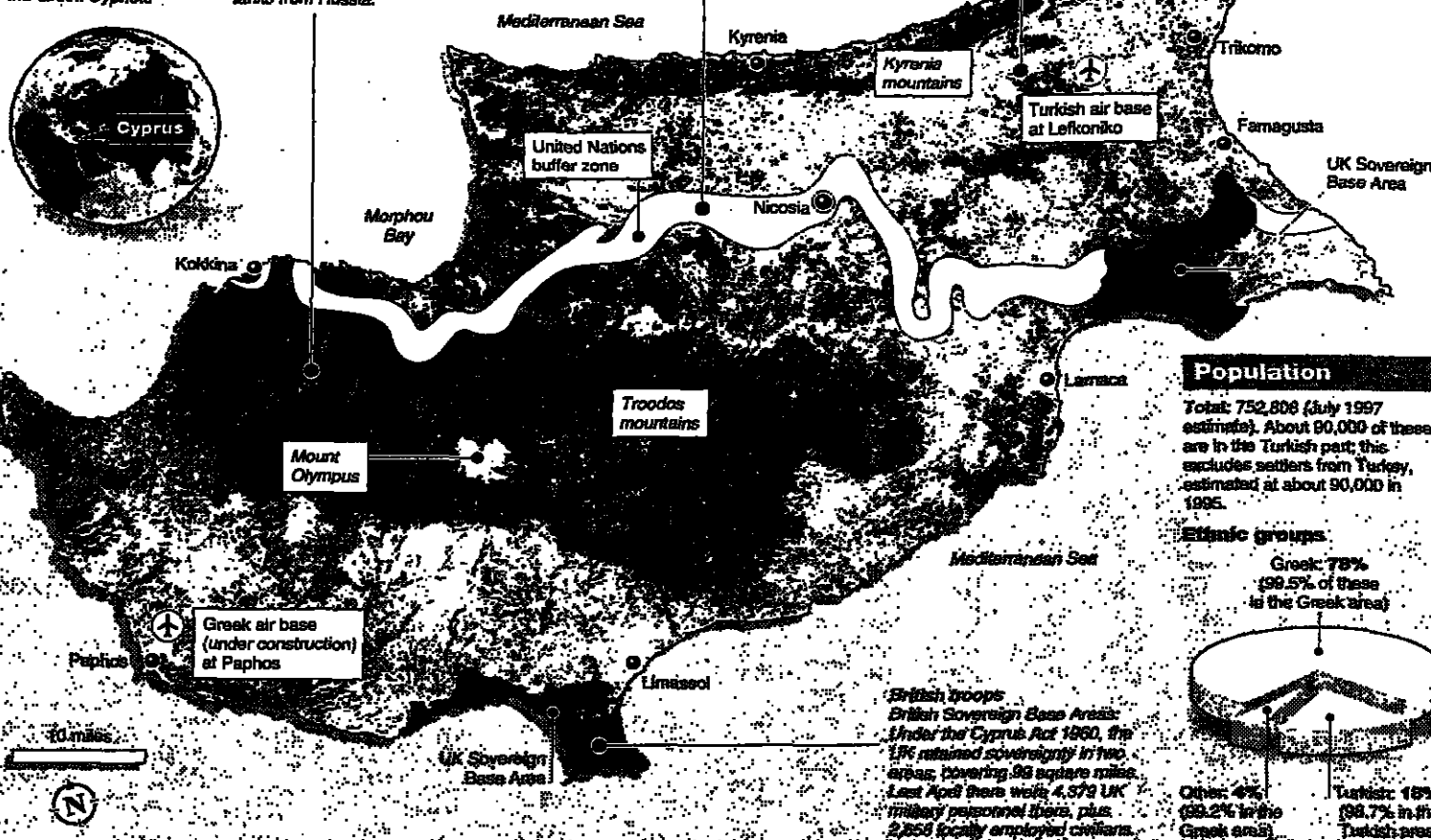
Neither Greeks nor Turks have much to win by war, but dangerous posturing makes conflict daily more likely. And Europe's gratuitously offensive attitude to Turkey does not help. By **Martin Woolacott**

Greek forces
Troops: About 11,000 troops (about 90% of them conscripts, the rest seconded from Greece), plus 88,000 reserves. Greece is reported to be forming a mechanised brigade on the island. Defence spending: about \$500 million a year. Missiles: In January 1997, the Greek Cypriot

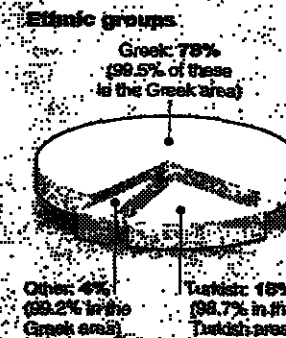
concluded an agreement with Russia to buy a number of S-300 long-range surface-to-air missiles. These have a range of 90 miles and are designed to counter Turkish air superiority. Tanks: In 1996, the Greek Cypriot forces took delivery of 41 T-80 main battle tanks from Russia.

UN troops
Last year there were 1,180 UN Peacekeeping Forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP), plus 35 civilian police. They supervise the cease-fire and maintain the buffer zone between the lines of the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces and the Cyprus National Guard.

Turkish forces
30,000 troops (of which 4,000 are active and 26,000 are reserves), including 235 main tanks, about 100 armed personnel carriers and 3 patrol boats. Defence spending: about \$510 million a year.



Population
Total: 752,806 (July 1997 estimate). About 90,000 of these are in the Turkish part; this excludes settlers from Turkey, estimated at about 90,000 in 1995.



A LONG the cease-fire line in Nicosia, the streets leading toward the forward positions of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots were once crisscrossed by barbed wire, tank traps, and weapons pits. But after years in which exchanges of fire on what is known as the Green Line have become almost unknown, after decades of a UN presence along the line, and after measures to reduce the number of troops on duty, life has returned to many of these blighted regions, particularly on the Greek side. The splendid 19th-century merchant houses have been restored, and shops, restaurants and coffee houses have sprung up, especially in the handsome quarter near the Famagusta Gate, where some of them are tucked right into the old Venetian fortifications.

Here you can have a glimpse of what the capital of Cyprus might have been like in its entirety had the island not been pulled apart by ethnic strife, and Nicosia's partitioned halves subjected first to the wrecker's ball of war, and then to an unhappy combination of neglect and overdevelopment.

That conflict is now almost a quarter of a century in the past. Yet among those taking coffee in the restaurants are Greek Cypriots ready at a moment's notice to move into Turkish pits only a few hundred yards away. Among these reservists — lawyers, schoolmasters, printers and shopkeepers — many of the older officers and NCOs are veterans of the fighting in 1974. That was when Turkish forces invaded the island and in two campaigns, consolidated a Turkish northern zone, which later came to call itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

These men already patrol the areas along the Green Line when doing their periodic tours as reservists. The possibility that they might have to move into their positions in earnest suddenly appeared less remote this week, with the start of negotiations between the European Union and 11 aspirants for membership. Among the 11 is Cyprus, and the arrival of a Greek Cypriot delegation in Brussels set off an exchange of threats and counter threats between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and between Turkey and Greece, with some Russian posturing thrown in as well.

Turkey repeated: its now

long-standing warning that if there is movement toward the inclusion of a divided Cyprus in the EU, it will "integrate" Northern Cyprus into Turkey. This policy taken to its logical conclusion, would amount to annexation. The Turkish government also said again that if the Cypriot president, Glafkos Clerides, imports Russian surface-to-air missiles later this year, he will be taking a step on the road to war, and that Turkey will attempt to intercept such shipments.

In Ankara, with pointed timing, the new Association Council of Turkey and Turkish Cyprus met. In Moscow, another piece of obvious timing brought together the Greek defence minister and the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, to affirm the desirability of "military and technical co-operation" between Russia and Greece. Earlier, a Russian spokesman had underlined his government's commitment to deliver the S-300 surface-to-air missiles ordered by Clerides and expected this September.

Certainly there is an element of bluff in all this. Yet military threats are more and more part of the politics of the Eastern Mediterranean. What begins as a means of increasing political pressure could conceivably lead to real military action, not only in Cyprus but between the Greek and Turkish navies and air forces. It would be, if it ever should happen, the most useless of wars, since none of the potential belligerents has anything to gain, territorially or otherwise.

IN Cyprus, the Greek Cypriots might covet some of the territory held by the Turks but would hardly have a chance of getting it. The military balance in and around Cyprus, even if the Greek air force occupied bases there and had them defensively covered by those Russian missiles, would still be very much in Turkey's favour. Yet for Turkey there could be no realistic purpose in taking even more Cyprus territory, and very little, in a wider war, in grabbing an uninhabited Greek island or two.

A war could lead only to loss of life and economic damage. Worse, it would fix the relations between nations in that part of the world in a rictus of permanent hostility. Even a quarrel over the missiles which fall short of war might have much the same consequences. As Keith Kyle of the Minority Rights Group Inter-

national put it in a recent report on Cyprus: "It is obvious that a crisis involving both the UN and the EU in confrontation with Turkey could result."

Cyprus is a part of the wider Eastern Mediterranean problem and, above all, of the problem of the relationship between Turkey and Europe. Europe's failure to recognise that it needs a coherent diplomatic strategy for Turkey is at the root of what has gone wrong in the region. The lack of such a strategy means that Europe's Turkey policy has

been pushed this way and that by Greece's fears and sometimes by Greece's mischief-making, by Germany's anxiety to avoid an issue which is a political loser in the anti-immigration atmosphere in that country, and by the readiness of other EU members to postpone and procrastinate over Turkey. This procrastination reached its extreme at the EU Summit in Luxembourg last year, when Turkey was not only relegated to the extreme back of the queue for membership but was gratuitously insulted by

the Luxembourg prime minister, Jean Claude Juncker. At that moment the chances of a breakthrough on Cyprus diminished sharply, and the chances of a dangerous standoff between Greece and Turkey sharply increased. Since then, an angry Turkey has not had to look far for reminders of how it is regarded by some leading European figures, the most recent being late last month when Wolfgang Schäuble, Helmut Kohl's preferred successor in the CDU, told a committee that Turkey's

inclusion in the EU could "endanger" its identity and political workability. Turkey's serious internal problems include the insurgency in the south-east, the social stresses consequent on the large movements of internal migration and urbanisation, the polarisation between Islamist and secular political forces, and an activist military which intervened politically last year to bump the Islamist Refah Party out of power. So qualms like those of Schäuble are understandable. But what seems to be lacking in Europe is an understanding of how much Europe is central to the secular, democratic and liberal programme in Turkey. To back away publicly at that plank is dangerous. It not only threatens the peace of the region, but could take the heart out of the very political forces in Turkey which Europeans should champion and recognise as the Turkish arm of European social democracy.

European insensitivity to Turkey has undermined the plan to bring about a Cyprus settlement and Cypriot entry into the EU by encouraging Ankara to see these as phases toward its own incorporation in the union. The idea was that the Turks would make short work of the objections of the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş, if they were really convinced of Europe's

good intentions. But after Luxembourg they are inclined to see what is going on as a plot to reunify Cyprus on Greek terms and get her into the EU while leaving Turkey outside.

The plan is not yet completely in ruins. There is still a large squad of special envoys, including gifted diplomatic operators like Richard Holbrooke from the US and Sir Richard Hannay from Britain. Hannay was in Cyprus late in February for what appears to have been an unproductive trip. Holbrooke will be visiting later this week to see Denktaş. The UN Special Envoy, Diego Cordovez, recently toured the region, and Denktaş met UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Cordovez a few days ago.

THE problems of a Cyprus settlement are many and intricate. But it is generally agreed that the main lines for it were laid down over 20 years ago by Archbishop Makarios and Denktaş. The rest is detail, and political will, which amounts to the same thing. Whether Cyprus should have a presidency which rotates between the communities, for instance, or a president elected by universal suffrage, balanced by key ministries going to the other community, is the kind

of question which can be used to avoid progress but can be settled in a week or so once the will is there on both sides.

Whether the Turkish part of Cyprus should be recognised as a state, if only for a few minutes and as a preliminary to federation, is an utterly vexed question; but it could similarly be disposed of. President Clerides, after making some imaginative proposals in talks a few years ago, came to the conclusion that neither Denktaş nor the Turkish government then had the will to settle. He had cause for disappointment. But his strategy then was twofold: to strengthen defence connections with Greece — hence the plans for Paphos bases for Greek aircraft and missiles to cover them — and to advance negotiations with the EU. Both, he seems to have reasoned, would put pressure on Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots to reach a settlement before the missiles came and before entry talks were too far advanced. That is still the Greek Cypriot view as expressed yesterday by Yannis Kasoulides, the foreign minister, when he said that the accession talks will "act as a catalyst for the reunification of our country". What Clerides did was not necessarily wrong, but in combination with the worsening relations between the EU and Turkey, it could have the opposite result to that which he intended.

WAR is so manifestly a stupid and dangerous course for everybody concerned that it is still very unlikely. But, if the situation is to be transformed in a positive way, there will have to be truly serious efforts in 1998. They should include offering Turkey a place in the EU membership queue that Ankara finds acceptable, an attempt to get broader negotiations going between Greece and Turkey, and a number of concessions by both sides in Cyprus itself. At the moment talks cannot even be contemplated because of Denktaş's insistence that they be state-to-state rather than community-to-community. Removing this obstacle and others, however, will be of no avail unless the deterioration in relations between Turkey and Europe is caught and decisively reversed in the coming months.

Sources: (1) Cyprus: In Search of Peace; (2) Financial Times, March 21 1998. **Graphics sources:** The Military Balance 1997/8, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (particular thanks to Colonel Terence Taylor); The Middle East & North Africa 1998 (Europa Publications); US Library of Congress (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/rds/cy>); CIA World Factbook (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>); Satellite photograph: Earth Satellite Corporation/Science Photo Library. **Graphics:** Finbar Sheehy. **Research:** Mark Espiner. **Researcher:** Martin Woolacott is the Guardian's foreign-affairs commentator.

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Finance Guardian

Chairman denies that 'clash of egos' killed pharmaceuticals merger

Glaxo rules out bid for SKB

Julia Finch

GLAXO Wellcome chairman Sir Richard Sykes last night ruled out a £50 billion hostile bid for SmithKline Beecham and insisted his planned friendly merger with SKB did not fail because of a personal clash.

Sir Richard told MPs that aggressive takeovers among big drug firms were "almost impossible" because of the vast sums involved.

Giving evidence to the Commons science and technology committee, Sir Richard was making his first public comments since the collapse in February of a £100 billion merger which would have created the third largest company in the world.

The deal was abandoned, wiping £13 billion off the value of the groups, when Sir Richard and SKB chief executive Jan Leschly were unable to agree on the allocation of jobs in the new organisation.

According to SKB, Sir Richard reneged on agreements

made when the merger plan was first hatched. But Sir Richard said that Glaxo had "acted in good faith, and negotiations are negotiations. SmithKline Beecham were the ones that broke off relations, not Glaxo Wellcome."

He added: "We got to the point where we did not believe the benefits outweighed the risks." The companies had negotiated for 22 days to find a merger deal that would "maintain the motivational enthusiasm and intellectual drive of the people in research and development".

At the end of that period, he said, "we had considerable misgivings". After the deal was called off many institutional investors said it should be revived if it could deliver the substantial benefits to shareholders the groups had at first suggested.

They said the men's egos should not prevent such a deal going through and called for the non-executive directors to sort out the problems. Last night Dr James Wedel, Glaxo's research and development director, said the deal did not founder because of in-

flated egos. "Ego may have played a part in getting us in it, but it did not play a role in getting us out of it," he said. Other investors made it clear they would be willing to back a hostile bid and urged Glaxo to press ahead, even though analysts have calculated it would involve Glaxo in a goodwill write-off of about £40 billion.

Last night, however, Sir Richard denied that his shareholders were in revolt, and said he was not under pressure to revive a bid. But he was willing to take Glaxo

into another merger if it would enhance the company's research and development capability, and pointed out there was no legal obstacle to Glaxo making a fresh approach to SmithKline.

There is, however, now no prospect of the two company chiefs working together. Sir Richard was summoned to appear before the cross-party science committee when the merger plans were first unveiled and the two companies said that they could achieve savings of more than £1 billion.

Notebook

Rose of revival blooms at Argos



Edited by
Lisa Buckingham

ARGOS will launch a share buyback plan tomorrow, as the last shot in its defence against the £1.6 billion takeover bid from Great Universal Stores.

The move follows yesterday's clearance of the takeover by Trade and Industry Secretary Margaret Beckett, who rightly accepted the view of the Office of Fair Trading that a takeover would not be against the public interest.

Following last week's deal with GUS rival Littlewoods and the announcement of a new retail strategy, Argos is in a much stronger position than could have been imagined when the battle began in February this year.

Then, Argos was crippled by two top executives falling ill and another disappointing Christmas. Now it has a vigorous leader in the former Marks & Spencer and Burton executive, Stuart Rose. It has also managed to produce some rather better trading figures, albeit for a quiet sales period, and pulled off the surprise deal with GUS's arch-rival, Littlewoods, which will see a joint venture catalogue distributed through the Argos shops.

The Littlewoods deal could ultimately determine the outcome of the battle, even if it might appear peripheral.

First, it emphasises the validity of GUS's central argument — that it makes sense to put together a leading mail-order operator with a high street catalogue retailer.

Second, it means GUS cannot walk away as easily as it might have done, since the consequence would be a strengthened rival and an even greater impediment to the group's own ambitions in direct selling.

Argos will no doubt tell shareholders that the central issue is the future of its core retailing operation — and that the future is rosy, as it were, under the experienced retail hand of Stuart Rose.

There is no doubt, too, that an injection of retail skills will make life easier and more exciting for shoppers, so presumably better for the company's bottom line.

But, as ever, the central issue is price, and how far GUS will have to raise its 570p-a-share offer.

It will be a tough week for GUS chairman Lord Wolfson to make some kind of an assessment of how low he can stay, and yet still succeed.

Hot trotter

WILL Ottakar's, the regional bookseller whose shares are floated on the market next week, prove to be the Trojan horse of the book world?

It will be a turbulent ride for those in the ring. But for holidaymakers already flying high on the benefits of a strong pound, the battle could guarantee blue skies.

Prescott bans water cut-offs

Nicholas Bannister
Chief Business
Correspondent

WATER companies will be forbidden to disconnect domestic customers who fail to pay their bills, under new proposals put forward yesterday by John Prescott, the deputy prime minister and environmental supremo.

However the government's long-awaited review of water charging has failed to resolve the issue of what, in the long term, should replace rateable value as the basis for calculating water bills.

The previous government had laid down that water companies would have to stop using rateable value as the basis for unmeasured water bills by the year 2000.

Labour's review concluded that unmeasured water bills for domestic customers should continue, and it proposed to bring forward new legislation to allow rateable value charging to continue into the next century.

But the government clearly favours water metering as the long term solution. It has come down against compulsory water metering and plans to allow customers to have meters installed free of charge.

Such customers, in a departure from meter practice, would be allowed to revert to the old unmeasured charging system within a year if they wished to.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.463 Germany 3.011 Malaysia 5.10 Singapore 5.24

Austria 27.15 Greece 525.07 Malta 0.949 South Africa 8.21

Belgium 61.69 Hong Kong 12.56 Netherlands 3.378 Spain 253.90

Canada 2.215 India 50.11 New Zealand 3.378 Sweden 13.11

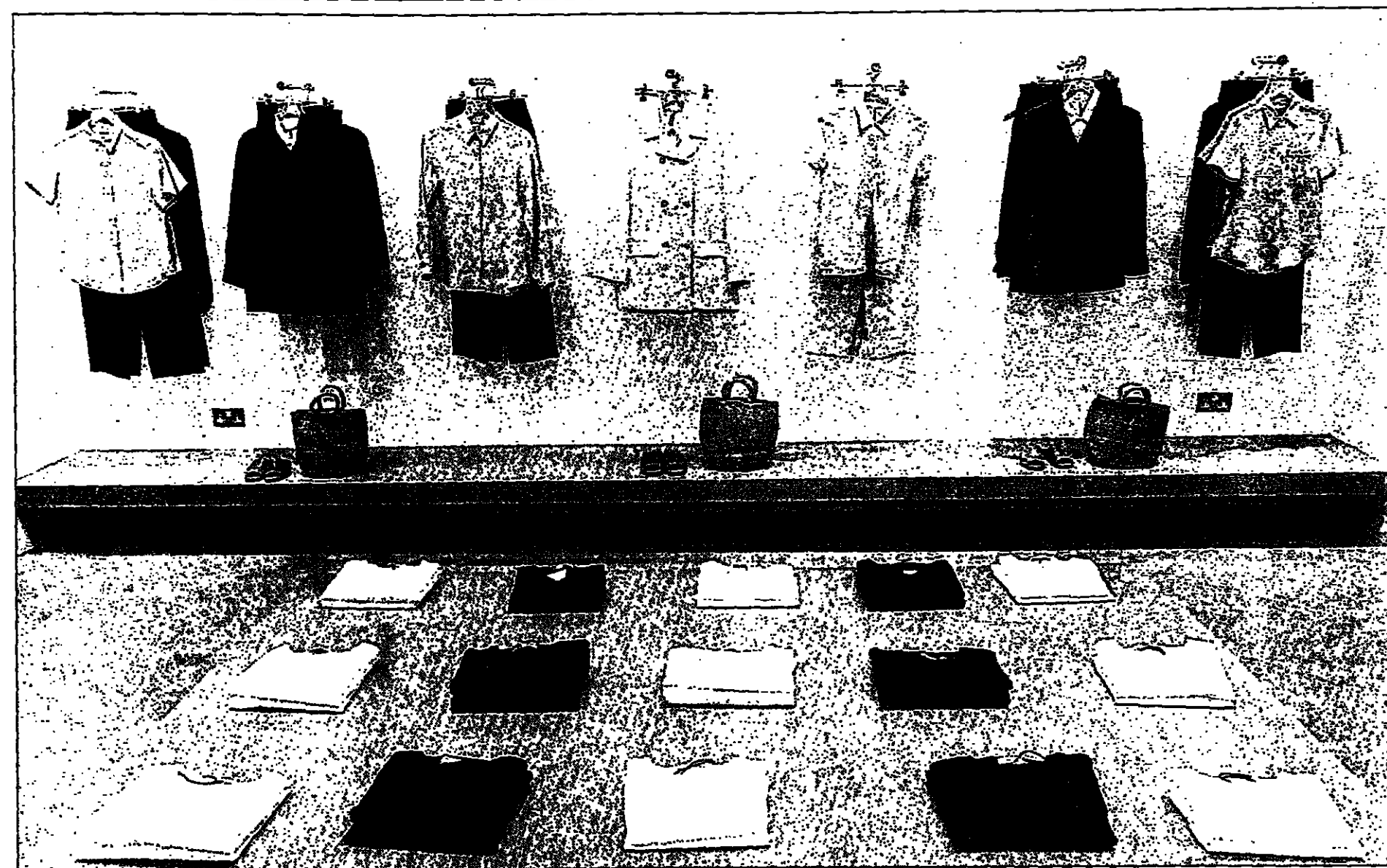
Cyprus 0.677 Ireland 1.196 Norway 12.45 Switzerland 2.60

Denmark 11.53 Israel 6.03 Portugal 306.96 Turkey 300.380

Finland 9.214 Italy 2.967 Saudi Arabia 6.78 USA 1.638

France 10.990

Supplied by Reuters (excluding rupee, shekel and mautari)



Comfort and joy... Nicole Farhi's range of good-looking and wearable clothes at the new French Connection store in New Bond Street, London

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

French Connection plans £11m expansion

Nicole Farhi to spearhead push into world market, writes **Pauline Springett**

FRENCH Connection, the clothing group which also owns the Nicole Farhi chain, yesterday unveiled ambitious expansion plans designed to thrust it to the forefront of the international fashion sector.

The company is planning to spend £11 million on the expansion during 1998, twice its spend during last year. Of this, \$4 million will go on the development of a 16,000 square foot Nicole Farhi flagship store and restaurant in New York, which is due to open in February 1999.

Chairman David Bernstein, speaking as the group unveiled a 32 per cent rise in pre-tax profits at 25.2 million, said the company's success showed it was the right time to expand. "In terms of general visibility of the French Connection and Nicole Farhi brands, the profile of the

group is really going to expand and explode," he said. The company currently had 46 stores and planned to open another eight this year, he said. In terms of square foot of selling space, that equates to 122,000, compared to 100,000 square feet at the start of 1997. He added that, by the end of 1998, the company intended to have 140,000 square feet of space.

Nicole Farhi Ladieswear will have 60 per cent more space in Selfridges' London store, and 800 square feet in Selfridges' new store in Trafford Park, Manchester. Selfridges in London will also carry the Nicole Farhi Menswear range.

While maintaining its focus on its two core brands, French Connection is also planning to extend the ranges of products sold. There are plans to expand Nicole Farhi

home furnishing which has already been tested in the Sloane Street store. Other plans include a move into mail order; a French Connection catalogue will be sent out later this month. The bathroom range is to be extended, and a full make-up and skincare range introduced later in the year.

Mr Bernstein, the new chairman of Manchester City football club, said that French Connection's Winter 1997 range had performed well and forward orders for Winter 1998 were ahead of last year, a scenario which was being repeated by Nicole Farhi.

Mr Bernstein said that pink was the current hot colour at French Connection, with Nicole Farhi going for more muted, neutral colours such as grey.

Unlike many companies, French Connection has benefited from the strength of sterling because its imports exceed its exports. French Connection shares rose by 25 pence, to close at 427.5 pence.

Fine fashion that can be worn

BEING avant garde is all very well, but the success of Nicole Farhi and French Connection proves the virtue of making clothes men and women really want to wear, writes **Susanah Barron**.

It is an obvious concept, but balancing the changing demands of fashion with more practical considerations is a trick few can pull off successfully.

Nicole Farhi can, which is why her catwalk shows, while never rocking fashion to its foundations, are always well received.

Like Betty Jackson and Jasper Conran, with whom she is often compared, Farhi's strength lies in interpreting trends for her customers without making them look stupid.

In the autumn, for example, her customers can expect to find avant-garde shapes such as pleated skirts — as pioneered this season by Helmut Lang — in a more workable, flatter-

ing form. It is an ability that has earned the French-born designer a secure position in the big league of British fashion.

Informing everything is her own particular style: relaxed, easy shapes in deluxe fabrics. Farhi is not a designer to ignore the comfort factor. The soft, roomy, charcoal-grey suits and sweaters which feature heavily in her autumn and winter menswear collection are quintessential Nicole Farhi.

French Connection performs a similar feat at the high-street level.

Often bracketed along with Oasis, Jigsaw and Warehouse, French Connection appeals to young women who have outgrown the Top Shop but who still want a fashion content in their wardrobes.

The label is adept at slipping high-fashion winners into its more everyday collections. Last Christmas, French Connection's short



Simply successful: Slip by Farhi PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

sequined slip — not quite a snip at £160, but still much cheaper than the designer versions — was the party dress of the season. This summer, it is a grey two-tone trouser suit, trendy but not overly so, which is flying out of the shops.

Arms-merger plan adrift

David Gow
Industrial Editor

ACROSS-PARTY group of MPs yesterday exposed gaping holes in merger plans by European producers, British Aerospace, France's Aérospatiale and Germany's Daimler-Benz Aerospace.

Members of the Commons defence and trade and industry committees accused the three of failing to come up with a clear plan or detailed timetable.

Kevin Smith, BAe's deputy group managing director, in the first comments by a senior executive on the plans submitted to the British, French and

German governments on Friday, virtually conceded that they faced an "insuperable obstacle" with the French company state-owned.

The merger plans envisage a publicly-quoted company, the European Aerospace & Defence Company or Euroco, which would embrace the civilian Airbus business, missiles, defence electronics and satellites in four divisions. Airbus itself is due to become a public company next year.

But, under repeated questioning from Menzies Campbell, Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, Mr Smith and defence industry colleagues admitted that different ownership structures and the lack of a common procure-

ment policy rendered merger prospects difficult.

One executive said privately: "There will be no real European restructuring until we get a common market and common government requirements, and there's no evidence of that so far. We also need a pan-European regulator for the industry."

Aérospatiale and Dasa, the German company, now hold 57.5 per cent each of Airbus, the model for Euroco, while highly profitable BAe holds just 22 per cent. MPs pointed out that Euroco could end up dominated by the French government and Daimler-Benz, Dasa's parent, in which Deutsche Bank holds a quarter of the equity.

Joy unbundled for viewers

Simon Beavis
Media Business Editor

CABLE television users are to get more freedom to choose the channels they subscribe to after regulators yesterday started an overhaul of the "bundling" of channels, which forces subscribers to take as many as 30 channels without choice.

In a move that will force BSkyB and the cable companies to restructure pricing and could force unpopular channels out of business, the Independent Television Commission is now insisting that subscribers be allowed to sign up for smaller packages of basic programmes.

The measures will also give viewers easy access to premium movie and sports services. Unveiling the proposals, the ITC said bundling channels was anti-competitive but that the new rules the ITC will ban "minimum carriage" — where channel producers only allow operators to carry their channels if they are forced on nearly all subscribers. There will also be a ban on forcing subscribers to buy one premium channel to get another.

ITC chairman Sir Robin Biggam said: "If you go into a supermarket, you don't have to buy 80 per cent of the stuff on the shelves."

The commission has requested submissions on the implementation of the plan to be sent to it by May 5. The ITC aims to have the new system operating by the autumn, when digital pay-TV services are due to start on satellite, terrestrial and cable. City analysts were wary of predicting the impact on BSkyB, 40 per cent-owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

Last night, the cable industry welcomed the ITC's move. "We have consistently maintained that the carriage obligations that are imposed on pay-TV retailers restrict viewer choice and hold back growth in the pay-TV market," said a statement issued by Bob Frost, chief executive of the Cable Communications Association.

Racing

Monk may have Pride on retreat

Chris Hawkins

BARTON BANK followed his second in last season's Cheltenham Gold Cup by winning the Martell Cup at Aintree and supporting Dorans Pride will be hoping for a similar performance from this season's Gold Cup third this afternoon.

It is asking a lot of horses who had a hard race at Cheltenham to produce their form just over two weeks later and there have been some notable failures here in the past but Michael Hourigan, the trainer, is convinced Dorans Pride is none the worse for his gallant but vain effort behind Cool Dawn.

Dorans Pride had every chance until losing vital ground with a mistake at the third last at Cheltenham but he ran on well enough and almost got up to deprive Strong Promise of second.

It is true to say, however, that Dorans Pride is not the chaser all Ireland hoped he would be. He is good but far from unbeatable and there may be a fresher opponent capable of lowering his colours today.

The Grey Monk is certainly fresh as this is his first race since the middle of December when he beat Rough Quest at Haydock, but a virus problem has been responsible for his very light work-load.

He has slowly been returning to something like his best according to Gordon Richards, his trainer, and with his preferred soft ground must have a good chance of making

up for lost time. Escartefigue, who won the final race on this second to Florida Pearl in the Sun Alliance Chase at Cheltenham but was always fighting a losing battle against that talented rival, He must be respected but for a novice looks to have plenty to do at the weights.

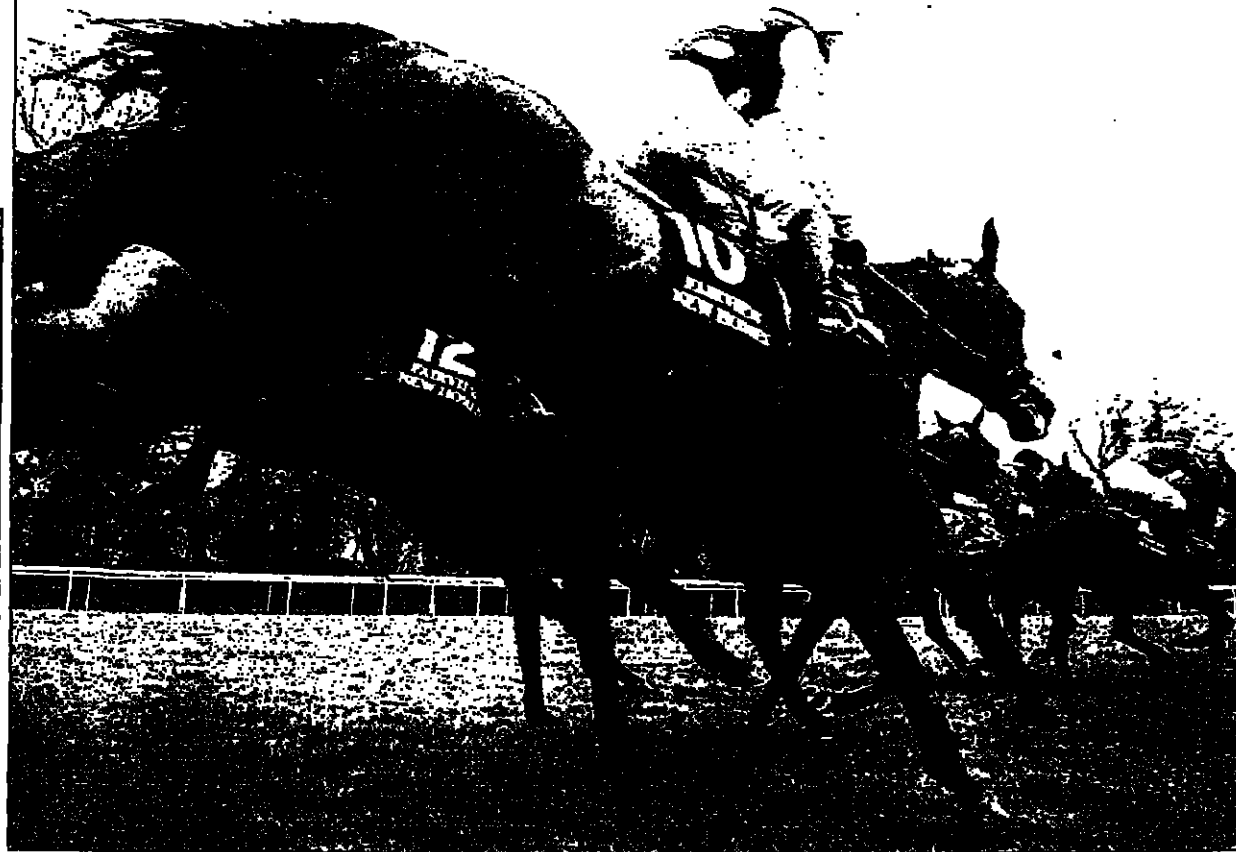
Mary Gale usually runs well in this race, winning it three years ago and finishing second to Barton Bank last season. Recently there has not been much evidence of the old spark, however, and I pass him over in favour of The Grey Monk (2.35).

The card opens with the Seagram Top Novice Hurdle in which Fataliste (2.00), representing the irresistible Martin Pipe-Tony McCoy combination, should be hard to beat. Fataliste seems well suited by a sharp track and beat previous winners Supply And Demand and Real Estate very easily at Kempton last time.

Pipe's Champveuve will be a warm order to follow up his Arkle Chase victory in the Sandeman Maghull Chase although he seemed to have a pretty hard race at Cheltenham.

Nakr did the double in 1994 but it is hard to achieve and on much softer ground than at the Festival Edelweiss du Moulin (3.10) could gain his revenge. He was fourth at Cheltenham and will be better suited by Aintree.

Unquestionably the big spectacle of the day is the John Hughes Handicap Chase over the National fences. A field of 23 makes it an attrac-



Foot perfect... Perryman clears an open ditch on the way to victory at Ascot

PHOTOGRAPH: JULIAN HERBERT

ive betting event and there will be some good each-way value around.

Once again I am going against Cheltenham form and in this case the Cathcart winner Cyfor Malta by selecting the appropriately named Martell Boy (2.45) trained by the outstanding Venetis Williams whose 33 per cent strike rate is the best in the country.

News on the Martell Grand National front yesterday was that Superior Finish, due to be trainer Mark Pitman's first runner in the race, is

only 50-50 after pulling up lame following a gallop.

"He'll be declared and we'll make a decision on Friday morning," said Pitman. "We're doing everything possible to try and get him fit."

Meanwhile Jenny Pitman has ruled out Amtrak Express leaving Paul Carberry with a ride at the moment. Mrs Pitman still intends to run Nathaniel Lad (Rodney Farant) and Mudahim (Jason Tidy) and says of the former "he's absolutely buzzing and the ground is ideal."

Security clampdown at Aintree

RACEGOERS at Aintree over the next three days will face massive security checks and considerable inconvenience as a result of the IRA bomb threat which caused the postponement of last year's Grand National, writes Chris Hawkins.

The public will be individually searched on entering the racecourse and car parking on the course is being actively discouraged by racegoers being advised to use a free park and ride bus service starting a mile from the track at Junction 6 of the M67. Cars parked illegally in side streets will be towed away.

Superintendent Ray Revell-Johnson, in charge of the security plans, has warned that anyone making a seven-year jail term while special arrangements have been made to deal with "extremist groups."

Taunton (N.H.)

CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FORM
2.25 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
3.30 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
4.05 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

Sharp, right-handed circuit of 11m with 150yds uphill run-in. Going: Good to Soft in Places. 5. Donates blinkers. Long distance travellers: 165 (2.55) & Paddington Jones (4.05), D. Seven days winners: 5.40 Mrs Em. Blinded that time: 2.25 Storm Damage, 3.30 Buzzards Bellway, 4.05 Song Of The Gypsies, 4.40 Space Captain, 5.40 Teasdale. Winner: None.

2.25 CONDITIONALS SELL (PCAP HIDE)	TOP FORM
1. 2.25 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 3.30 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 4.05 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

2.55 MERCEDES BENZ NOVICE CHASE	TOP FORM
1. 2.55 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 3.30 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 4.05 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

3.30 ORCHARD MAIDEN HURDLE (QV 1)	TOP FORM
1. 3.30 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 3.30 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 4.05 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

4.05 ORCHARD MAIDEN HURDLE (QV 2)	TOP FORM
1. 4.05 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 4.05 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 4.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

4.40 ORCHARD MAIDEN HURDLE (QV 3)	TOP FORM
1. 4.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 4.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 4.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.10 HUNTER CHASE (Amateur riders)	TOP FORM
1. 5.10 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.10 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 4)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 5)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 6)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 7)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 8)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 9)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 10)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 11)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 12)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 13)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 14)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

Aintree Jackpot card with form guide

CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FORM
2.00 Fataliste	Down Leader
2.30 The Grey Monk	Down Leader
3.10 Fataliste	Down Leader
3.45 Fataliste	Down Leader
4.20 Fataliste	Down Leader
4.55 Fataliste	Down Leader
5.30 Fataliste	Down Leader

Grand National course: (3.45 race only) Left-handed, triangular course of 24m with 494yds run-in. Fences have been modified but still provide searching test of jumping ability. Middle course: Handicap course of 12m with 290yds run-in. Fast course with steep bank.

4.40 MERCEDES BENZ HANDICAP CHASE	TOP FORM
1. 4.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 4.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 4.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.10 HUNTER CHASE (Amateur riders)	TOP FORM
1. 5.10 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.10 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 1)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 2)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 3)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 4)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 5)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 6)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 7)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 8)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 9)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 10)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 11)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 12)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 13)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 14)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

Security clampdown at Aintree

CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FORM
2.00 Fataliste	Down Leader
2.30 The Grey Monk	Down Leader
3.10 Fataliste	Down Leader
3.45 Fataliste	Down Leader
4.20 Fataliste	Down Leader
4.55 Fataliste	Down Leader
5.30 Fataliste	Down Leader

Grand National course: (3.45 race only) Left-handed, triangular course of 24m with 494yds run-in. Fences have been modified but still provide searching test of jumping ability. Middle course: Handicap course of 12m with 290yds run-in. Fast course with steep bank.

4.40 MERCEDES BENZ HANDICAP CHASE	TOP FORM
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2. 4.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 4.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 4.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.10 HUNTER CHASE (Amateur riders)	TOP FORM
1. 5.10 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.10 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

5.40 ORCHARD PORTMAN HURDLE (QV 1)	TOP FORM
1. 5.40 Look to The Mirror	South West Express
2. 5.40 Forest Boy	Forest Boy
3. 5.40 Song Of The Gypsies	Song Of The Gypsies
4. 5.40 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
5. 5.10 Into The Crowd	Into The Crowd
6. 5.40 Mrs Em	Mrs Em

101	110	Swedish Money (74) (Q) 3-10-12	W. J. Gossard 4-10-12
107	11P110	Buddy Marvel (74) (Q) 3-10-12	P. Carberry
108	114421	Fatalistic (53) (Q) M Pips 4-10-12	A. P. McEay
109		Announcing (5) (BF) 5 L Moore 4-10-8	N. Williamson *
110	121	Puffin Risk (8) (Q) M Pips 4-10-3	R. Donnelly

Bettings 2-1 Fatalistic 4-1 Buddy Marvel, Dam Leader, 11-2 Zaritska, 10-1 Puffin Risk, 12-1 Mountain Storm, 14-1 Announcing, 16-1 Cavalier, 20-1 hen Risk. 56 Sweep Gently

16

Chelsea chase more silverware, page 14
Davies the Wales stripper, page 15

Sheffield find fresh steel, page 14
Beck gets back to basics, page 15

SportsGuardian

Second one-day international

West Indies v England

Knight defies tricky pitch

Mike Selvey in Bridgetown on the opener's stalwart innings

NICK KNIGHT continued his superlative form in the one-day series by providing the foundations for an impressive England total at Kensington Oval yesterday.

On the same pitch on which he made 122 to take the Man-of-the-Match award in the first game on Sunday, but in altogether more testing conditions, he made 90 from 107 deliveries, with a six, hooked off Courtney Walsh, and seven fours, before England were all out off the final ball for 266.

With conditions easier in the afternoon West Indies got off to a thunderous start in reply, reaching 106 for three in the first 15 overs before Robert Croft and Mark Ealham began to reel them in.

Clayton Lambert and Philo Wallace had seized with relish on the new-ball bowling of Dougie Brown and Dean Headley, scoring 41 before Brown had Wallace well caught by Adam Holoake at mid-off in the fifth over. Lambert then hit three successive boundaries off Headley before he was run out in spectacular fashion by Knight, who dived to save Brian Lara's push into the covers and, still off balance, threw down the stumps.

It was Headley who took the prime wicket, though, and credit to Holoake for persisting with him despite an onslaught that saw him concede 68 runs from seven overs with the new ball. Lara, having made 24 from 19 balls, leaned back to force Headley through the off side but hit straight to Mark Ramprakash at cover, who set off on a run of unadulterated joy.

It was crucial and although Stuart Williams — playing instead of Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who was ill — and Carl Hooper began to repair the breach, West Indies lacked England's depth and at 149 for three off 28 overs the match was still balanced.

If England's batting on Sun-

day had touched the heights at times, yesterday's performance was perhaps even more stunning, the key being determination — and more than a little luck early on — allied to the depth and confidence in the batting order which brought 87 runs from the last eight overs of the innings.

The pitch, which had been watered on Monday, a sweltering day, then spent all of Tuesday and the night before the match swathed in covers as the rain teemed down. When finally it was exposed, the surface had the dull polish of a recently plastered and not yet dry wall. It was guaranteed to prove awkward.

Lara won his fifth consecutive toss, and in the conditions would have been considered barking if he had not asked England to bat. With the seam biting like a rottweiler, Knight and Alec Stewart did well to survive the supreme test from Curtly Ambrose, and runs came at such a dribble that it might have been fairer to award four

runs if the ball went beyond the 30-yard fielding circle.

Even with the fielding restrictions the first boundary did not come until the seventh over, when Knight edged Ambrose to third man. It was gritty stuff, Stewart in particular never looking comfortable, and it was no surprise when he was out driving a catch to backward point.

Although Ben Holoake had slipped down the order in the first game he came in first wicket down this time and proceeded to give the beginnings of impetus to the innings, scoring 16 of a second-wicket stand of 50 — from only 37 balls — with Knight before he was telescopically caught by Franklin Rose off his own bowling.

Crosbie Hick soon followed, bowled through his legs in

Rawl Lewis's first over of leg-spin. Knight was into his stride by now, though, driving and pulling confidently, passing his half-century in the following over and celebrating by dancing down the pitch to Rose and belting him through extra cover for four more runs.

Ramprakash, in his first one-day international since the tour of South Africa two winters ago — he was playing because Graham Thorpe's back injury necessitated the Surrey left-hander's return home — had joined Knight and the pair added 69, with Ramprakash making 29 before he was caught at deep square leg off Lewis trying to repeat the biggest six of the series, which he had dumped over midwicket earlier in the over.

Knight's tremendous effort came to an end four overs later when he was lbw to Phil Simmons, but although Adam Holoake was unfortunate to be run out by Walsh's short-union on to the stumps shortly afterwards, the building blocks were in place for a final charge. It came in thunderous fashion, from Brown (21 from 26 balls), from Matthew Fleming (28 from 17), but in particular from Ealham, who hit with such power and confidence that his 45 took only 37 balls and included a six and five fours.

Scoreboard

ENGLAND XI	90
N V Knight lbw b Simmons	3
A J Stewart c Lara b Walsh	3
B C Holoake c b Rose	0
C A Hick b Lewis	11
M R Ramprakash c Ambrose b Lewis	29
A J Holoake run out	16
M A Ealham c Ambrose b Simmons	45
D R Brown b Simmons	21
M V Fleming c Williams b Ambrose	28
R D Croft not out	11
D W Headley b Ambrose	9
Extras (b2, w2, nb1)	12
Total (for 10, 50 overs)	266
Fall of wickets: 21, 71, 72, 131, 154, 168, 206, 238, 257	
Bowling: Ambrose 10-0-44-2; Walsh 10-1-1-1; Rose 8-0-50-1; Lewis 10-0-20-2; Simmons 9-0-46-3; Hooper 4-0-33-0.	

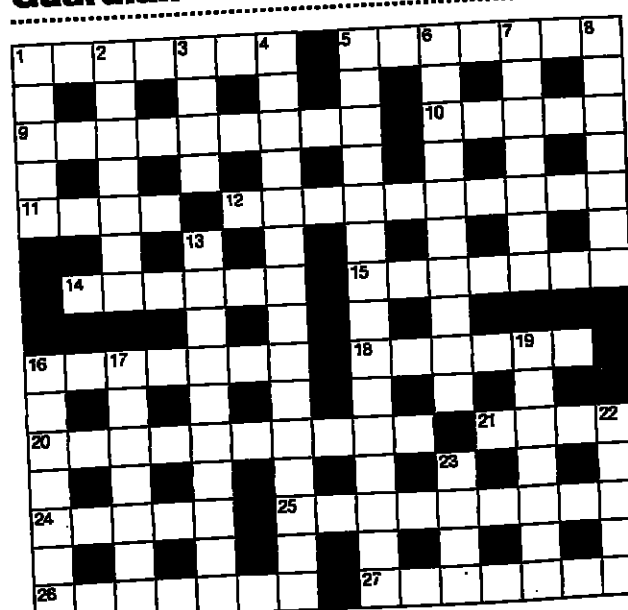
WEST INDIES XI	28
C Lambert run out	22
P A Wallace c A J Holoake b Brown	24
B C Lara c Ramprakash b Headley	24
S C Williams not out	27
C L Hooper not out	27
Extras (b2, w1, nb1)	8
Total (for 3, 22.2 overs)	149
Fall of wickets: 41, 54, 75	
To bat: P V Simmons, J R D Jacobs, P A Rose, C E L Ambrose, C A Walsh, R N Lewis.	
Umpires: B Morgan and E Nicholson.	



Pulling England round... Nick Knight hits one of his eight boundaries after a slow start

PHOTOGRAPH: KIERAN DOHERTY

Guardian Crossword No 21,238



Across

- Don't upset to a degree, so get out of the way (7)
- Turn over top card first for prize (7)
- A slug can spoil good parts (5)
- Speak in calm but terse fashion (5)
- Bar bender (4)
- Clergy hoped riots could be settled (10)
- Water pistol first seen at the tea table (5)
- Aboard a ship is the owner (7)

- Power to choose in calamitous situation whence improvement may be in sight (7)
- Bath chap? (6)
- Wild storm break associated with gothic novel (4,6)
- Talking bird (4)
- Man with identity, in a manner of speaking (5)
- Philosopher bashing the church in size 10 (9)
- African party in fair business condition (7)
- Woman named? (7)

Down

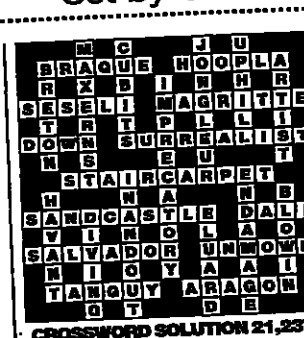
- Provocation may cause some strange reaction (5)
- Form of verse composed in Staines (7)
- Ben is good at divinity (4)
- Funeral parlour? (9,6)
- Take the law into one's own hands? (5,3,7)
- Number one in support of music? (5,5)
- Cannable particles used for medication (7)
- Sometimes their object is rated unfairly (7)
- Mink hasten to disperse from around the M25 (7,3)
- Gather report on return of cheese (French) (7)
- Enthusiastic reception to nil tax charge (7)
- Lie with 21 — it could be quite proper (7)
- One gets out of the way of the tough (5)
- Scribe who wrote about the last time (4)

Solution tomorrow



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Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the new masthead for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997

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ABFPRST

Aintree put out to glass



Frank Keating

SIR PETER O'Sullivan will not be calling the horses at Liverpool on Saturday for the first time in half a century, but he will be turning up in style all right — champagne breakfast on the Pullman from London. The octogenarian can still sum up in a sentence the unique appeal of the annual 10-minute Aintree mullerkey — "Challenger du Lac might find the Grand National amusing or he might reach the first fence and say 'Not for me, thank you'."

It is a year since that eerie, time-suspended weekend between the Saturday bomb scare and the running of the race on the Monday. And for some reason the memory bank remains most full not of Lord Gyllene's epic confidence-restoring gallop but of the wave upon wave of relieved and fond all's-well-with-the-

world-after-all cheers when it was announced that O'Sullivan was in place and ready for his final Aintree commentary. Before the police cleared the course last year the commentator had found time modestly to witness the unveiling of a permanent statue to himself, and by August this year there will be more mementoes on view to the public when Aintree's new visitors' centre and museum is opened.

O'Sullivan has presented his *aide memoire* sheet, a "crib" in coloured crayons and personal hieroglyphics of the runners in the 1961 National, only the second he called for television which began transmitting live the year before. Previously he read the race for radio.

From that 1961 race, won by the grey Nicolaus Silver, O'Sullivan has also given the museum a framed racecard signed by two Russian jockeys and Masters of Soviet Sport, Vladimir Prakhov and Boris Ponomarenko, who had suddenly arrived with their horses by train in an all too brief and jolly attempt to defeat the Cold War. Relief threw Ponomarenko at Valentine's Brook, and Prakhov, having remounted Grifol after tumbling off at Becher's first time round, pulled up at the Water.

With a small budget to pur-

chase memorabilia — a Royal Doulton tankard depicting 1937's winner Royal Mail was recently bought at auction — Aintree's marketing manager Joe McNally has already received any number of gifts or loans for the collection, the oldest so far being a package of artefacts, donated by the trainer David Nicholson, of one of his grandest Victorian predecessors William Holman, who saddled three winners in the 1850s. There are winners' sashes and horseshoes worn by no end of winners, from ESB in 1956 to Lord Gyllene. Richard Pitman has given a square of wooden floor from the old County Stand with the gallant Crisp's name engraved upon it, and Mercy Rimell signed racecards of her husband Fred's record string of National successes between 1956 (ESB) and 1970 (Gay Trip).

SUSAN FIGGOTT has donated two family heirlooms from her husband Lester's ancestor Ernie, who won the race on Jerry M (1912) and Poethlyn (in 1918 when it was run at Gatwick). The most gazed-at item of trivia already glass-cased will probably be the last red starter's flag ever used — or not, as the case may be — by Capt

Keith Brown in the race that never was in 1993, the jockey John Buckingham's wife with which he shared clear of the carnage of Jump 23 in 1967, and the skull-cap worn by Dick Francis when Devon Loch so dramatically sank himself in 1956's run-in in front of his owner, the Queen Mother.

It would have been the Royal Family's second National winner — and, nicely, the Royal Stud has loaned the embroidered parade-ring rug of its solitary No. 1, Ambush 11 in 1900, when Edward, Prince of Wales, was assailed by a tremendous volley of affection. O'Sullivan will be able on Saturday to have a leisurely Aintree lunch for only the second time in 51 successive Grand Nationals. He had one with the Marquis of Portago in 1952, the year the owner, Aintree, Mirabel Topham, banned the BBC microphones.

The Spaniard had ridden (and fallen) twice in the National and had also won motor racing grands prix, set a Cresta Run record and been an Olympic swimmer. He was killed driving in the Mille Miglia five years after his Aintree lunch with Sir Peter. Now there's a menu they should put in a museum.

Racing, page 13

TO TAKE CORNERS PROPERLY, JUST PUT ON SOME GERMANS

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